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New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada.

Mr. Axworthy (Canada): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. Your experience and wisdom will doubtless guide us in carrying out the important work ahead.

As we all know, that work is to immediately and resolutely transform the high hopes of the Millennium Summit into a better reality for the peoples for whom the United Nations was founded.

(spoke in French)

This means assuming responsibility for our actions and our inaction. It also means that Governments must be ready to assume their responsibility for their citizens.

Last week our leaders delivered here a message of hope and determination. Their words clearly showed that we all need the United Nations. The United Nations is the only organization that embodies universal values; that offers a global forum to address common problems; and that is on the front line around the world fighting for people.

(spoke in English)

There was another message from the Summit about whether the United Nations is keeping up with the times: about whether we, the Member States — custodians of the Organization and guardians of the Charter — have the political will to support renewal and modernization.

When the lights turned off last Friday night here in New York, did other lights go on around the world — in our Chancery offices, Parliamentary assemblies and Cabinet meeting rooms — to illuminate the way forward? Are we all, each in our own way, asking how we can change our ways to better help the United Nations manage a new global agenda?

Clearly, globalization has brought unprecedented benefits and possibilities. But it also clearly brings new risks to people in all our countries. Many of those new risks cross State lines, while most violent conflict now occurs within States' borders. In both cases, the impact is felt directly by ordinary people.

Yet the debate within the United Nations remains driven — and too often circumscribed — by rigid notions of sovereignty and narrow conceptions of national interest. And action by the United Nations remains hampered by inflexible institutional structures that have become increasingly inward-looking, driven by their own interests rather than by those they were designed to serve.

The Secretary-General has, with a courage rarely seen in public life, given us a vision of a way forward.

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It is a vision that serves the world's people, and one that resonates with them, even though it may aggravate some of their Governments. He has challenged us to follow his lead, to adopt a people-centred approach to international relations, to move this Organization from the sidelines to the forefront of change.

This is not a new agenda for Canada. Indeed, over the past five years, promoting human security has been the focus of our own approach to our changing world. And it has been encouraging to see the shift in attitude toward a more realistic sense of what it means to be secure in the world as an individual.

Our leaders endorsed this new vision in their Summit Declaration. But if we have truly come to the understanding that security means more than protecting borders, we must now act to turn last week's good intentions into effective action. This means taking responsibility to adapt our institutions, broaden participation in their functioning, and increase transparency and accountability to make a tangible difference for the people we represent.

It also means responsible, accountable global behaviour, sharing and protecting the common space that sustains life.

Aggressive pursuit of the global arms control and disarmament agenda is the ultimate responsible act. Our generation built the nuclear arsenals that are outmoded and rotting; we produced the chemical weapons that poison people; and today we still make and distribute the small arms that are found everywhere: in the hands of children, the arsenals of drug dealers and the garrisons of guerrilla fighters.

But we have also had a certain foresight to begin building a system of international obligations and principles to contain such behaviour. We now have to validate and implement these instruments. Above all, we must do nothing to damage them.

Certainly, Governments must prepare for the defence of their people. Responsible defence is an element of responsible government. But surely, our responsibility to defend our citizens begins not with the development of new weapons systems, but by dismantling old ones: by ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); by joining the 104 States parties to the Ottawa Treaty on landmines; by implementing the international non-proliferation norms and disarmament obligations embodied in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); by developing comprehensive action plans to stop the proliferation of small arms and missile technology.

The collective action of States working for the long-term security of their people is clearly the preferable path. But where States are unable, or unwilling, to protect their citizens, the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, has a special responsibility to act.

Today, most wars are fought within failed States. In these wars, it is the victimization of civilians that is the motive, the means and the manifestation of a conflict.

If the Council is to acquit itself of its responsibility to these people, their protection must be at the core of its work, not at its periphery.

This is the agenda that Canada has brought to the Security Council over the past two years. It has not been an easy task, but I would like to acknowledge that the Security Council is meeting the new challenges. In recent months, the Council's work has increasingly focused on the protection of civilians, with action in the areas of AIDS, physical protection, war-affected children and sanctions reform. The Council has recognized that dealing with these issues is critical to building effective peace-support operations, and has embodied this recognition in recent resolutions. Today, we are providing members a checklist, a checklist of responsible action in the Security Council.

(spoke in French)

The Brahimi report also proposes a plan of action. It is a comprehensive strategy for strengthening the United Nations capacity to help people. Canada supports the panel's findings. We will be its strongest advocate and can be counted upon to work tirelessly to build the political support required to implement both the spirit and the letter of its recommendations.

(spoke in English)

By far the most difficult challenge in protecting civilians in armed conflict is in situations where abuse is most severe: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, massive and systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law which cause widespread suffering, loss of life and abuse.

We need a new form of deterrence against such forms of behaviour. The establishment of an

International Criminal Court (ICC), which makes impunity illegal and which holds individuals directly accountable for their actions, is that deterrent. And if its power to deter the abuse of people fails, the Statute provides both a basis and a structure to take concrete legal action to redress injustice.

The Court's Statute provides us with a unique opportunity to fix one of the worst failings in the international system. Today I appeal to every Government here that has not done so to sign the Rome Statute by December and to ratify it on an urgent basis, so that the world's people can finally have the justice they deserve.

Canada seeks to systematically put in place the building blocks for a new type of international system, one that is inspired and guided by the United Nations Charter, but that is also prepared to deal with the underside and underworld of globalization.

Of course, prevention is the best form of intervention. But when preventive measures fail; when the quiet diplomatic efforts and the targeted sanctions do not work; when the fact-finders find facts too horrendous to imagine; then there must be recourse to more robust action.

The question of intervention in these instances, including, as a last resort, the use of military force, is fraught with difficulty and controversy. Many would sweep it under the rug as too divisive, too difficult, too damaging to the status quo. But Rwanda, Cambodia, Srebrenica and Kosovo remind us that it is important to focus on this question. It would be easy to pretend that the humanitarian tragedies associated with these places are a thing of the past. It would be easy, but it would be wrong. There is no certainty that similar atrocities will not happen again. Indeed, the opposite is more likely. The spiral into extremes of human suffering cannot always be constrained.

Reading the editorial page of *The New York Times* on Tuesday, 12 September, we realize that some would have us believe that the United Nations Charter was written only to protect States and State interests:

> "intervening in civil conflicts takes the United Nations a step too far".

I disagree. I say that in the face of egregious human suffering it is a step in the right direction.

Nothing so threatens the United Nations very future as this apparent contradiction between principle and power; between people's security and Governments' interests; between, in short, humanitarian intervention and State sovereignty.

Last fall I stood before this body and argued that the United Nations Charter was written for people. Our collective agenda here is not the nation States' agenda, or the ministers' agenda, or the diplomats' agenda. It is the people's agenda. Indeed, "We the peoples" are the opening words of the Charter. Those who would seek to hide behind that document to justify inaction need only to read its preamble to reacquaint themselves with its original intent.

Secretary-General Annan has challenged us to rethink what it means to be responsible, sovereign States. Canada has responded by creating an independent international commission on intervention and State sovereignty. Its purpose is to contribute to building a broader understanding of the issue, and to foster a global political consensus on how to move forward. The commission will be led by two co-chairpersons — one from the developing and one from the developed world — with the participation of a wide range of representatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations from all regions and under the overall guidance of an advisory board composed of ministers, former ministers and distinguished practitioners from the academic, humanitarian and legal fields.

The commission will undertake its work during this Millennium Assembly year, and will present its recommendations in 12 months' time. I ask those present here in the Assembly Hall to join in this enterprise, difficult as it may be, so that we can seek to reconcile these concepts to find the space that we can all share.

It is difficult, but it is not impossible. We have done it before. Thirteen years ago, the Brundtland Commission's report, "Our Common Future", took two seemingly contradictory ideas — economic development and the protection of the environment — and out of that contradiction forged a synthesis called sustainable development. That new concept fundamentally changed the way in which the world thinks about those issues, and its work informs our thinking to this very day. It is Canada's hope that this new commission can diffuse the anxiety that surrounds

the issues of intervention and sovereignty by building a similar bridge between our current notions of these concepts, and in so doing help to define the way ahead for Governments and the United Nations to tackle the most challenging international dilemma of the twenty-first century.

However, the responsibility no longer stops just with Governments. The private sector must also take its responsibility for the communities on which it depends for its business. Ethical business is good business. The many companies that have joined the Secretary-General's Global Compact with Business recognize that profit made on the backs of exploited and abused children — by gun-running, drug dealing or conflict diamonds — is no longer acceptable. In the globalized economy, the world's people are the ultimate shareholders. If they do not profit, no one will. We must therefore work on all of these fronts and with all of these new players to build a future where human security is universally respected and protected. In the meantime, there are steps that we can take to protect the most vulnerable.

To build a world that values human security we must start with concern and action for those who will inherit it. It is fitting, therefore, that in this year of fresh resolve the future of our children is a key element of the agenda, particularly through the special session on children that is to be held next year. Nowhere is the safety and well-being of children more at risk than in conflict situations. Children should have no part in war. Yet today they are among its main victims, counting in the millions.

(spoke in French)

Four years ago, Graça Machel brought attention to the horrific plight of war-affected children. Since then, action has been taken too reduce their suffering, most notably with the appointment of Olara Otunnu as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and, more recently, with the historic agreement last January on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

This week, with Graça Machel as honorary Chairperson, Canada is hosting in Winnipeg the International Conference on War-Affected Children. This meeting, the first of its kind, brings together more than 130 Governments, 60 non-governmental organizations and private sector groups, international organizations and young people from every region of the world.

(spoke in English)

I am pleased that so many ministers and senior officials from the Organization will join us in Winnipeg this weekend. I encourage those not already represented to attend.

The aim of the conference is twofold: to formulate a comprehensive, global action plan and to forge the necessary political will to implement it. Together, we hope it will help children traumatized by war, and ultimately eliminate their involvement and victimization in conflict.

Earlier this week in Winnipeg, as we opened the conference, a young Ugandan girl named Grace spoke to me, at a meeting of young people affected by war, about her experience as a child soldier. Her story was one of victimization and chilling brutality. Her belief that the international community could help her and others like her was touching and inspiring. Her plea for us to do so is the essence of the Organization's vocation. Indeed, it is one of our basic responsibilities. For me, that young woman's simple appeal makes it clear that we have no option but to be ready, to be willing, and to be able to forge a United Nations for the twenty-first century.

In view of the daunting challenges ahead, any attempt to retreat, to shut out the world or to turn away from international engagement would be to follow a dangerous path that is neither practical nor desirable. The truth is that we share a common humanity. The reality is that we are linked by the forces of history into a common destiny. The fact is that the answers to our problems lie in strengthening, not diminishing, global cooperation and global solutions.

In today's world, the security of States and the security of people are indivisible. Providing for that security is a necessary precondition for success in other important endeavours, such as advancing economic aid and trade development. In this new century, too many people like Grace are still subject to the worst of the past century: to the scourge of war, to human rights abuses and to too few prospects for social progress and a better standard of living. Yet the hopes contained in the United Nations Charter still have meaning for them, and indeed relevance for all of us. Fulfilling its aspirations is our enduring goal and fundamental

responsibility. With human security as our guide, let us make it our focus as we renew our commitment to the purposes of the United Nations and to a better future for Grace and for all the people that we represent.

This goal is a responsibility that I have been honoured to share with many of those present here over the past five years. It is a goal that we must all continue to strive towards — whatever our position in life, whatever our title — in order to ensure that this system we have built does not surrender to the cynics who offer no alternatives, or to the game players who paralyse the transcendent purposes of the United Nations for simple transitory diplomatic points.

Only in so doing will we truly live up to the promise contained in the Charter: to serve the majesty of the people and to make this Organization work for them.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jamaica, His Excellency The Honourable Paul Robertson.

Mr. Robertson (Jamaica): Sir, I offer you Jamaica's warmest congratulations as you assume the high honour of the presidency of the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations.

At the same time, I wish to express our appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, who, by his astute and judicious leadership, brought to a successful conclusion the work of the fifty-fourth session.

I also take this opportunity to welcome Tuvalu, a fellow small island State, to the United Nations family.

We meet in the wake of the historic gathering of world leaders last week, when the international community sought to redefine and articulate a common vision for the future of all its citizens. We now have the opportunity — indeed, the responsibility — to evaluate just how far we have come in the mission we set for ourselves through this Organization; to address honestly our shortcomings in commitment and action; and to examine practical, realistic strategies that will result in measurable progress in areas identified for urgent action.

The Secretary-General, whom we commend for his stewardship during the past year, has urged us to consider a world in the future free from poverty. Indeed, promoting development that ensures the well-being of all peoples is one of the fundamental goals of this Organization. However, a review of our efforts to achieve this ideal shows uneven progress through an increasingly diffused institutional structure.

Over the past decade, we have sought to refocus and articulate the development agenda by addressing key issues in a series of special global conferences. Through the respective political commitments and plans of action which we agreed to implement, we have sought to devise a network of policies and programmes to promote people-centred, sustainable development.

Yet economic strategies embracing these goals have brought little tangible benefit to the majority of citizens of the international community. Nearly half of the world's people languish in extreme poverty, and still more remain on the fringes of the global economy.

Development efforts have been frustrated by the challenges posed by globalization and trade liberalization. Sustainable development ultimately involves an enhanced capacity for income and employment generation, as well as the provision of equitable health, education and other social benefits. But this cannot be achieved without economic growth and expansion. It is this opportunity that globalization, which indeed carries the potential, has so far failed to deliver to the majority of developing countries.

For small island States like Jamaica, there is another dimension to the development challenge. This is because of the well-known economic limitations of size, market and resource base, a fragile ecosystem and susceptibility to natural disasters. Decades of investment in infrastructure and industry can be wiped out during a single hurricane, destroying the economy and diverting resources to reconstruction and rehabilitation for a number of years.

Small economies attempting to compete effectively in the international trading system are just as vulnerable. There is a need for an urgent review of the inequities in the global trading system whereby selective application of the regulations permits developed countries to maintain protectionist policies and subsidies that work against developing country exports, while stripping the more vulnerable of preferential market access. We are deeply concerned that a mechanism established to promote free trade for growth and development could be so manipulated that it exposes the smallest and weakest to a hostile trading environment while removing their means of survival.

Special and differential treatment provisions have not been implemented, and the request for duty-free, quota-free treatment for the least developed countries has not been agreed to.

We are particularly disappointed that, in ongoing negotiations to reach agreement on a marketing regime for bananas that is compatible with the World Trade Organization (WTO), we have found little flexibility, no empathy and an unwillingness to compromise on the part of those challenging the regime. Meanwhile, implementation of the WTO panel ruling has resulted in a dramatic loss of export markets in some Caribbean Community (CARICOM) States, spiralling unemployment, increasing poverty and many other social ills. For there can be no development without growth, and no growth without trade.

Deteriorating terms of trade adversely affect the balance of payments, exacerbating external debt. Many developing countries continue to experience severe debt burdens, and, in some cases, the debt problem has worsened over the past decade, trapping those countries in a vicious circle of poverty and underdevelopment. We must address the debilitating effect of debt servicing, which undermines growth prospects and compromises governments' capacity to finance basic social programmes. The international community should implement the debt-relief schemes already agreed to and design new mechanisms appropriate to different countries' circumstances.

The globalization of trade, finance and swiftly advancing information technology will present unprecedented opportunities well into the twenty-first century. For developing countries, however, the challenges of the trading system, limited access to international financial flows, a crippling debt burden and a low capacity to assimilate information technology will prevent meaningful participation in the international marketplace. Hence, the widening gap between rich and poor nations in the face of unlimited opportunity is the disturbing irony that we now contemplate.

If we are now to lay the foundation for a world free from poverty, then a new ethos in global governance must prevail: one that gives more than lip service to the development aspirations of developing countries; one that addresses responsibly the need for economic adjustment, reform and closer monitoring of the international financial infrastructure; and one that promotes greater coordination and cooperation between the major institutions and intergovernmental organizations responsible for international trade, finance and development.

That such cooperation is already being explored is indeed encouraging. But we will need serious commitment. Until now, there have been no parallel discussions on reforming the international financial architecture and the international trading system. The work of the Preparatory Committee for the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, including consultations with the Bretton Woods institutions, has progressed uneasily, leaving uncertainty regarding the outcome and likely success of that landmark meeting. We will wait to see whether meaningful World Trade Organization (WTO) participation will take place, as we consider it important to successful deliberations.

Of course, we applaud the evolving relationship between the Bretton Woods institutions and the Economic and Social Council. Each brings to the partnership its unique characteristics and strengths, which should make for successful collaboration. Perhaps similar relationships might also be established with the World Trade Organization. That cooperation, long overdue, reinforces the integral role that we believe the United Nations should play in key international decision-making on all issues which affect sustainable human development. We look forward to the extension of this cooperation beyond the co-financing of development projects, towards the harmonization of mechanisms and policies.

The importance of South-South cooperation as an effective instrument for the promotion of development among developing countries cannot be overemphasized. The historic meeting of the leaders of the South, held at Havana this year, strengthened our commitment to forge a common strategy for our future, sharing resources, expertise and best practices in partnership with one another. We strongly urge the continued strengthening of mechanisms that advance South-South relations and promote self-reliance. Increasingly, we must look to each other for our survival in the existing global environment.

We continue to look to the organs and agencies of the United Nations system to play a central role in supporting and advancing the development efforts of Member States. We are deeply concerned at the decline

in contributions to core resources for operational activities, and at the effect this has had in the narrowing and re-ordering of priorities in programme delivery. It is impossible to reconcile the contraction in core contributions with the donor community's expressed commitment to multilateral development assistance. The capacity of United Nations funds and programmes to maintain current levels of programme delivery is a matter deserving the urgent attention of Member States. We take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the valuable work of United Nations operational agencies in Jamaica.

Next year's special session of the General Assembly on children will give the international community an opportunity to renew its commitment and to consider further action to improve the quality of life for the world's children in the next decade.

The role of the United Nations as defender of international peace and security has undergone major transformation in the past decade. As inter-State tensions dissolved with the end of the cold war, civil conflicts developed in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe to take their place. The Security Council is now searching to adjust and redefine an effective strategy to deal with the new imperatives of peacekeeping and peace-building. This has meant seeking a delicate balance between respect for sovereignty and the urgent need for humanitarian intervention.

In too many cases the resolution of conflict has remained elusive owing to political ambitions or to racial or ethnic intolerance. Furthermore, the brutality and violence of conflict have often taken their toll on innocent civilians and children, creating still more new challenges with an increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Humanitarian intervention in such cases is imperative.

The effectiveness of peacekeeping missions is under scrutiny in the face of sharply escalating peacekeeping budgets. Rather than waiting until conflicts spiral out of control, we need to place more emphasis on conflict prevention. Jamaica therefore strongly supports the formulation of a comprehensive United Nations strategy to address the root causes of conflict.

It is time that we acknowledged that economic deprivation and social injustice lead to political and economic instability. Therefore, effective conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace building must incorporate a development component, and provide for the strengthening of civil institutions, particularly in post-conflict reconstruction.

And we must not forget the importance of adequately equipping the United Nations machinery to ensure robust intervention at every stage of the peacekeeping process, particularly for rapid deployment when necessary. This should also include resources adequate to ensure the safety of our troops deployed in missions across the world. It is the very least that we owe them. Jamaica pays tribute today to those who have paid the ultimate price in the service of peace.

The deadly flow of illegal small arms around the world continues unabated, sustained by greed and lawlessness. This illicit arms trade contributes significantly to the escalation and perpetuation of violence in conflict and post-conflict areas, undermining peacekeeping operations and frustrating efforts at disarmament, demobilization and the restoration of civil order. But this phenomenon is not unique to countries in a state of war. The illegal traffic in weapons is also linked to the illicit trade in narcotics, and this undermines stable democracies like Jamaica, destroying the social fabric of our communities.

This situation simply cannot stand. Urgent action is needed. Global interdependence warrants collective action to stem the flow of these guns from producer to receiving States. The responsibility to curb this illicit traffic cannot rest with the receiving States alone.

Jamaica looks with anticipation to the convening of the first International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects next year. It is our hope that this meeting will address comprehensively and decisively national, regional and international measures to regulate and control the legal manufacture, acquisition and transfer of small arms; measures related to the marking, registration and tracing of these weapons; and mechanisms for the systematic exchange of information.

The transhipment of nuclear and other hazardous waste through the Caribbean Sea poses yet another kind of danger to the security of small island States of the subregion. The Caribbean Community has repeatedly expressed concern at the threat to the fragile marine and coastal environment of the Caribbean posed by this continued practice. A single nuclear accident in

this semi-enclosed sea would have consequences we dare not even contemplate.

This concern was again brought to the attention of the international community during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on Nuclear Non-Proliferation, held earlier this year. We look forward to cooperating with like-minded States, and we propose to work towards ensuring that a regime is established for liability and compensation to our countries in the event of an accident.

On Friday, 8 September, Jamaica signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We now look forward to the contribution that the Court will ultimately make to the strengthening of international jurisprudence, by addressing the serious crimes of global concern committed by individuals who hitherto escaped the reach of the law.

We are also very pleased to report that the International Seabed Authority has completed its drafting of the Mining Code. This marks an important first step in the process toward the full establishment of operations of the Authority that will ultimately enable all nations to share in exploitation of the resources of the seabed. Jamaica encourages wider participation in the work of the International Seabed Authority and urges Member States to act to ensure its continued financial viability.

While the United Nations is by no means perfect, we still meet here because we hold an enduring faith in the principles and ideals that it represents. We are convinced that it remains the best forum for dialogue and resolution of disputes. Let us now face the future together responsibly, with full respect for the needs, aspirations and rights of our fellow man. This may well be difficult to achieve, but shared objectives, shared commitment and shared responsibilities will ensure a better world for all humankind.

As we contemplate the challenges for the future, let us resolve to begin a new dialogue within the United Nations system to forge a global partnership for peace, democracy and economic progress.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Oskaras Jusys, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Jusys (Lithuania): I would like to say, Mr. President, that I take special pleasure in seeing you preside over this Millennium Assembly session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support in all your endeavours. As one of the Vice-Presidents of the past session, I want to convey my special appreciation to my colleague and your predecessor, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, Theo-Ben Gurirab. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General for presenting his report "We the Peoples" to the world community.

Allow me also to convey my delegation's warm welcome to Tuvalu as a new member of the United Nations.

It is both remarkable and profoundly logical that in the beginning of the new millennium high representatives of almost 200 nations have gathered for one sole purpose — to comprehend challenges of the contemporary world. The fact that we all have gathered here, representing all regions of the world, cultures and religions, means that we all share the belief in the value, viability and potential of the United Nations. Heads of State and Government, during the course of the Millennium Summit, have guided us towards strengthening the United Nations, including its central role in peacekeeping and poverty eradication. Our task now is to act upon their guidance.

Globalization, the digital revolution and the triumph of free trade have transformed the world into a vibrant world economy. Interdependence within the world economy emphasizes collective problems and solutions. Thus, the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and many other international organizations are indispensable mechanisms in achieving stable peace, in assisting in shaping the course of development, and in ensuring that the world economy provides benefits for all.

Never has the world been so well off. Yet, never has it been confronted with so many problems on the global scale. The nature of threats has entirely changed. The phenomena are so complex that they defy easy generalization. These phenomena comprise extreme poverty and marginalization of entire communities; gross violations of human rights; ethnic conflicts and genocide; arms proliferation; terrorism; and environmental degradation.

No effort should be spared to free people from dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty. The goals adopted at the Millennium Summit are challenging. Assistance, new trade arrangements, and debt relief

will hardly constitute a panacea, unless necessary and strong commitments to poverty reduction, economic equality, combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic and supporting education are reflected, first and foremost, in national policies of individual States, and concurrently on the agendas of international organizations. Good health, literacy, and education are critical assets for economic development. Human capital, combined with a high level of economic equality, good governance, and abiding by the rule of law can really make a difference. This is the course we strongly uphold if we aim at reducing by half the level of extreme poverty by 2015 and achieving sustainable development.

The realities are that most of the economic thinking and ruling is being done within the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OSCE), and a fully coordinated approach to the problems of peace and development should be sought between these organizations and institutions and the United Nations.

We have yet to learn how to manage the spin-offs of globalization and how best to make use of international mechanisms to address new forms of threats. Better yet, prevention is preferable to cure. For really effective prevention, a broader definition of security is vital and must encompass pressing economic and social problems. The root causes of conflicts should be addressed as a fundamental part of efforts to establish secure peace and stability.

Should preventative strategies yield no results, the United Nations must have a truly effective peacekeeping capacity at its disposal. Lithuania will support every effort to fix structural deficiencies within the United Nations and adequately to staff and finance relevant departments. Provided the determination, resources, capacity and willingness are available, I believe, humanitarian catastrophes and crises can be averted. Proposals to improve the United Nations peacekeeping capacity and performance, especially those contained in the Brahimi report, have been widely endorsed by our leaders. Now we have to work on it with a view to shifting the historically prevailing conception of peacekeeping as an ad hoc job to one of the core functions of the United Nations.

Great challenges to the new international way of containing and resolving ethnic conflicts await in Africa. A prospective strategy could be to encourage and assist regional organizations, especially the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West African States; involve civil society and the business community; and, most notably, enhance the United Nations, especially the Security Council's capacity to act well in advance, before a crisis gets out of hand. Pledges to contribute to a safer world add up to nothing if mounting demands for adequately trained and equipped peacekeepers and civilian policemen, judges and administrators fall on deaf ears. East Timorese, Kosovars and Sierra Leoneans are pinning their hopes on us. Failure to respond to them would mean in the end that we do no more than celebrate our own individual security.

Lithuania has always been and remains committed to building collective security. On the international level, Lithuania emphasizes active participation in international organizations and its substantial contribution to peacekeeping efforts, such as its participation in the United Nations standby arrangements system or, from the very beginning of the international engagement in the Balkans, making our civilian policemen and military available to the missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. Moreover, additional commitments will promptly follow as more highly trained policemen and troops become available. In this regard, I wish to voice our strong desire to place a Lithuanian part of the joint Lithuanian-Polish peacekeeping battalion under the United Nations standby arrangements with a view to joining the Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade.

On the regional level, we have made membership in alliances of democratic nations — the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — our top priority. We regard the OSCE principles, including a country's right to choose its own security arrangements, to be of fundamental value to ensuring peace and security. We believe that, by taking this way, we will meet our economic, cultural, social and other concerns and enhance European security as a whole.

On the subregional level, we stress practical cooperative efforts to uphold democratic and economic transformation throughout the region. Over the past decade, our engagement with Poland has turned into a close partnership that has already produced remarkable results. Good bilateral relations with the neighbouring states of Latvia and Estonia have grown into a dynamic trilateral Baltic cooperation, which has expanded into a

broader Baltic-Nordic cooperation. We also seek to further develop mutually beneficial good-neighbourly relations with Russia. Joint Lithuanian-Russian projects on cooperation with the Kaliningrad region are a good example of our pursuit of a foreign policy of friendly relations, which also fully coincides with the European Union's Northern Dimension policies endorsed at the Feira European Union summit this June.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Cooperation requires wisdom and patience. Yet, all too often, guns have been a choice of cure for ethnic strife and social or economic collapse. Vigorous and urgent efforts are needed to curtail the proliferation of small arms. We deem it vital for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to address critical issues in the field of transparency, legitimate transfers, accountability, enforcement of sanctions and observance of moratoriums. A commitment to the elimination of landmines should now be coupled with an effort towards putting small arms off limits to belligerent causes.

Against the background of gains in disarmament, a number of setbacks have made the picture less encouraging. We share the profound concerns aroused by the abundance of weapons of mass destruction and the proliferation of missiles. I fail to see any way to create a safer world other than reducing, eliminating and outlawing weapons of mass destruction. In the wake of the successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Lithuania will work with other committed nations to achieve unequivocal commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Certain fundamental values are essential to international relations. Such are human responsibility and human rights. At the Millennium Summit, President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus spoke about his belief that

> "in the face of a globalized tomorrow, the United Nations will increase the scope of its human-dimension activities. Human rights should become a cornerstone of the emerging world structure". (*A/55/PV.5*)

The concept of the human dimension must be at the centre of all United Nations activities.

If we are to address the root causes of conflict, we have to admit that respect for human rights, the protection of minority rights and the institution of political arrangements in which all groups are represented are vital. For my region, of particular interest is determining how the international community can promote the rights of people coping with the post-communist transition.

The limits of human rights applicability are being constantly questioned. The United Nations should move ahead in the search for new and more effective instruments to fend off the challengers of human rights. Persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression should be brought to justice. If that is the goal which the international community is after, an effective International Criminal Court should start working as soon as possible. For its part, Lithuania will make good on its commitment to ratify the Rome Statute by the end of this year.

Based on the experience of my own country, I wish to stress that increasing the equality of social, economic, educational and political benefits across gender has a positive impact on economic development. These issues have been at the forefront of the agendas of all Lithuanian Governments since regaining independence, which have worked actively to help solve the question of equal rights and other problems which women face. One of our achievements is the adoption of the Law on Equal Opportunities, which is the first law of this kind in Central and Eastern Europe. Being a signatory State to the Second Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, I call for its early entry into force.

The attainment of freedom, security and welfare for people is feasible only by embracing the effects of globalization and not defying them. We have a global instrument readily available for that purpose, yet we keep arriving at the same conclusion: we need a United Nations with greater capacity and better performance. A number of measures have been carried out. The outstanding efforts of the Secretary-General cannot be overestimated. Lithuania supports the Secretary-General's greater emphasis on the United Nations as a results-based Organization. We also endorse the stress

on better management, mobilization of new resources and new forms of partnership. The Security Council should play its part in this regard. The lessons drawn from the Secretary-General's reports on Srebrenica and Rwanda have to be paid more than lip service.

Within the complex of measured designs for revitalizing the United Nations, our efforts to reform the Security Council occupy a prominent place. The Security Council would only win if it acquired a new power and authority base. I would like to reiterate Lithuania's position that the Security Council should be increased, both in permanent and non-permanent membership categories, and that the Eastern European Group should be given one additional non-permanent membership seat. In turn, even with a revitalized Council, cooperation with regional organizations should be strengthened.

The reforms, no matter how far-flung, may only remain a partial success as long as the United Nations is not given necessary resources. The Organization needs a sound and predictable financial footing. Therefore, Lithuania strongly supports a comprehensive review of both the regular-budget scale and the scale of assessment for peacekeeping operations. In the latter case, an ad hoc arrangement of 1973 has lost its touch with present day economic realities. We need to adjust the United Nations peacekeeping scale of assessment methodology to better reflect the current economic conditions of all Member States. I hope that the revision will enjoy support by all countries of the United Nations and will be carried out in an expeditious manner.

The United Nations symbolizes and guards the humankind hope for a better future. Let's make it happen!

The Acting President (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The next speaker will be Mr. Nizar Obaid Madani, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Madani (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure at the outset of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations to convey to His Excellency our sincerest congratulation for his election to the presidency of this session. His election to this important position reflects the respect of the international community for him personally, as well as the appreciation of the Member States for the positive role played by his country, Finland, in the international arena. I am confident that his presidency of this session will contribute effectively to our efforts to achieve the objectives towards which the international community aspires under the present, delicate international circumstances.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia and president of the previous session of the United Nations General Assembly, who managed the affairs of the session with great competence and experience and who deserves our compliments and appreciation.

I am also pleased to express my thanks and appreciation to His Excellency, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuous and tireless efforts to achieve peace and enhance security and stability in our contemporary world, as well as for the competence and ability he has demonstrated in leading the affairs of this Organization, relying on his rich and exceptional experience in the international arena. In particular, I wish to commend His Excellency for his sincere and extensive efforts in organizing the Millennium Summit, which, God willing, will contribute to achieving fruitful results with positive effect on our peoples and nations while ushering in a new century full of challenges and opportunities.

On this occasion, I wish to welcome the Republic of Tuvalu to the membership of the United Nations, hoping that its membership will enhance the effectiveness of the Organization and its noble objectives.

The present session of the General Assembly has followed immediately the Millennium Summit, a unique historical event. World leaders met in a dignified gathering that exemplified the unity of the human race and their collective endeavour to live in peace, security and prosperity. That Summit represented a valuable opportunity to reflect on and to discuss whatever might lead to a better life for humanity. The world leaders pledged in the final Declaration of the Summit to exert all possible efforts to achieve peace, security and disarmament and eradicate poverty and disease. They affirmed the sovereign equality of nations, respect for their territorial integrity and political independence, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. The Summit also provided a valuable opportunity to

evaluate the course of this Organization throughout its history, which has been full of opportunities and challenges, so as to enable it to achieve its declared principles and purposes.

In this regard, a thorough and candid evaluation of the role of the United Nations was presented by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz, the Crown Prince and the head of the Saudi delegation to the Millennium Summit. He discussed the challenges and problems that have impeded the United Nations from achieving the goals and objectives to which the human community aspires.

His Royal Highness presented a number of ideas and notions that represent a valuable contribution to efforts aimed at promoting and vitalizing the role of the United Nations. He mentioned the importance of linkage between modernizing the Organization's mechanisms and the nature of the issues it confronts. The effects of these reforms should consider the viability and performance of United Nations bodies in a way that enables the United Nations it to fulfil its required role in dealing effectively with the new developments in modern international relations.

One of the most apparent features of the new world order is the emerging phenomenon of globalization, which, as a developed framework for international relations, has occupied a large portion of the current political thought of nations. We view globalization as a phenomenon that should reflect the natural closeness between nations aimed at achieving social justice, overall development, equality among nations, and broadening the scope of cooperation in a manner that serves the issues of peace and security and stability throughout the world. However, and I read here from a statement by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz at the Millennium Summit:

> "We hope that the United Nations will support us in standing against a globalization that results in the hegemony of the strong over the weak, increases the causes of the oppression and exploitation of nations, and fosters injustice and inequality in international relations. We particularly warn of the ramifications of unbridled globalization and its use as an umbrella to violate the sovereignty of States and interfere with their internal affairs under a variety of pretexts especially from the angle of human rights issues."

The United Nations call for a civilized dialogue and declaring 2001 a year for Dialogue among Civilizations comes at an appropriate time as a civilized response to those who propagate the themes and doctrines of conflict and inevitable clash of civilizations. A dialogue among civilizations represents, in fact, a constructive beginning towards achieving globalization in its positive sense and its human aspect, something to which all peoples and nations aspire. A dialogue among civilizations would contribute to strengthening the values and principles of understanding and cooperation among cultures and civilizations. It will further promote respect for other religious beliefs and the cultural legacies of other nations in a way that consolidates the principles of peaceful coexistence and proliferates the culture of peace and tolerance.

Deviation from the values and principles of justice, equality and non-compliance with the rules of international legitimacy in resolving differences and disputes through peaceful means has led to the proliferation of wars and armed conflicts in many parts of the world. This has caused painful humanitarian suffering that continues to arouse the conscience of the world community. In our region, Israel continues to take intransigent positions and to reject the requirements for peace. This became evident during the recent talks at Camp David where the Israeli side insisted on maintaining positions that are diametrically opposed to the principles of peace that were agreed to in Madrid and to what was stated in United Nations resolutions with respect to the status of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Both the final communiqué of the Al-Quds Committee, which convened recently in Agadir, Morocco, and the resolution of the Council of the Arab League, adopted at its 114th session, reaffirmed the unshakeable Arab and Islamic positions with respect to the issue of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It also reaffirmed the impossibility of attaining a durable and comprehensive peace without reaching a just solution to this problem in a way that preserves Arab and Muslim rights, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, and that respects complete Palestinian sovereignty over Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Israel is making a big mistake if it believes that the peace process can proceed without total respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to return to their homeland and establish their own independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Al-Quds

Al-Sharif is an integral part of the occupied territories and is subject to Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Moreover, a comprehensive peace cannot be achieved without Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 line.

We continue to feel for the suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people as a result of the continuing refusal of their Government to abide fully by United Nations resolutions, which would allow for the lifting of the sanctions. In reiterating its concern over the suffering of the Iraqi people, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia proposed an initiative that would allow Iraq to import all the materials and goods it needed — except those that fall within the context of military items that threaten Iraq's neighbours. If such an initiative had been accepted, the needs of the Iraqi people would have been met and their suffering alleviated. However, the Iraqi Government was swift in rejecting this gesture, and thus it has prolonged the suffering of the Iraqi people. We once again express the hope that the Iraqi Government will act quickly to comply with Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) and the mandate of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of other international committees concerned with the release and repatriation of all Kuwaiti and Saudi prisoners, as well as with the return of Kuwaiti property. We once again reiterate the need to respect Iraq's independence, unity and territorial integrity.

We also strongly desire the removal of the causes of tension in the Gulf region. Accordingly, we hope that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will cooperate with the efforts of the tripartite committee, which has been entrusted with creating a conducive climate for direct negotiations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to reach an amicable and acceptable solution to the issue of the three islands.

As regards Somalia, my country welcomed the outcome of the national reconciliation conference, which took place in the town of Arta in Djibouti and which included the election of President Abdikassin Salad Hassan. We hope that the other Somali factions will join the reconciliation efforts aimed at promoting national accord and at achieving unity and stability in Somalia.

In Afghanistan fierce fighting continues and is denying Afghanistan and its people the fruits of liberation from foreign occupation.

The Pakistani-Indian conflict over Jammu and Kashmir remains a source of tension between the two neighbouring countries. We call on both sides to exercise the utmost restraint and to solve the conflict through negotiations, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, which give the people of Jammu and Kashmir the right to self-determination.

The continuation of these disputes and armed conflicts — which have claimed the lives of millions, depleted huge quantities of resources and caused destruction and serious damage to the environment — makes it incumbent upon the international community to make every possible effort to put an end to these conflicts and to find peaceful solutions to them. In this regard, we look to the United Nations to make greater efforts to reaffirm its role as a peacemaker and not just a peacekeeper. It has become evident that working to prevent conflicts from erupting is more effective and less costly than concentrating on peacekeeping.

In this respect and in compliance with the principle of resolving conflicts through peaceful means, our region witnessed two important events that marked a positive sign in relations between nations. In June 2000, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen signed the Jeddah agreement establishing final and permanent, international land and sea borders. This ended more than 60 years of border disputes. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has also concluded an agreement with the State of Kuwait for the demarcation of the shallow seas adjacent to the former neutral zone between the two countries.

The issue of disarmament is of great concern to my country, and we call for greater efforts in this area, especially as regards weapons of mass destruction. The presence of these weapons represents a great danger to international peace and security. We hope that the nuclear States will fulfil the pledges they made at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and adhere to the commitment to eradicate their nuclear arsenals.

In this context, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is very concerned about Israel's refusal to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and about its decision to keep its nuclear programme outside the scope of international controls. Israel's refusal to adhere to the

international will and to become part of this Treaty has aborted all efforts exerted by the peoples and countries of the Middle East to live in a region free from all weapons of mass destruction. Israel is the only country in the region that has yet to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a fact that has disrupted the balance of security and threatened peace in the region.

It is this imperative to stress the need to increase the effectiveness of the Non-Proliferation Treaty by making it universal and mandatory.

Cooperation on social and political issues has become a necessity that cannot be avoided or neglected. The economic and social problems of the developing countries make it incumbent upon us all to promote policies that can alleviate the effects of these problems, which in most cases exacerbate tension within and among nations. We believe that the developed countries have an obligation to assist in combating poverty, food scarcities, drought and famine.

It is unrealistic to apply the concept of globalization only as a means to liberalize the markets — removing restrictions — without also drafting a framework for action that stresses the need to consider the economic situation in many of the developing countries and to assist them in moving to a stage where they can participate in development. It is therefore important for the industrialized and technically advanced countries to help those developing nations without subjecting them to selective policies in technology transfer. Moreover, globalization should be a two-way street that requires the developed, industrialized nations to liberalize their markets and open them up to products from developing nations.

We are truly objective when dealing with environmental issues. We support conducting serious and informed studies based on evidence, studies that take into consideration the process of development in the developing countries. In this regard, we call upon all States to abide by Agenda 21 and urge the industrialized States to honour their international commitments regarding the transfer of environmentally friendly technology to the developing countries.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that we are facing enormous challenges in the new era, which makes it incumbent upon all of us to strive to achieve the maximum possible level of cooperation and solidarity. This is not confined to political and military challenges, but also includes new waves of challenges that result from the contemporary way of life with all its problems and complications and cannot be solved or managed except through organized collective efforts. Our firm belief in the important role of the United Nations in dealing with current issues and in facilitating appropriate international cooperation to address and contain these problems, makes us more determined than ever to support this Organization and help consolidate its constructive role.

It is my wish that we enter the new millennium with stronger determination and commitment to our collective goal to establish a secure world where values triumph and justice, equality and peace prevail.

Allah says in the Holy Koran:

> "Help ye one another in righteousness and piety but help ye not one another in sin and rancour." (The Holy Koran, V:2)

May peace and the blessing of Allah be upon you, Sir.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Aartsen (Netherlands): "We, the peoples" is a powerful rendition of world affairs and a daunting portrait of life for future generations. It took intellect and diplomatic *savoir-faire* to state a complex case in such a concise and forceful way. We are grateful to the Secretary-General and his staff for producing it.

"We, the peoples" are of course the opening words of the Charter, and I want to take them as a point of departure. Other speakers have done so before me and have argued in favour of a more robust structure for keeping the peace in the world community. They are right. The United Nations role in the area of preventing or limiting armed conflict was conceived as its principal purpose. The Brahimi report has shown how, in spite of that, the United Nations peacekeeping function has in fact become its Achilles heel. The Brahimi recommendations deserve to be implemented — the sooner the better. At present, the Netherlands Government and parliament are debating how to improve our national contribution to peacekeeping.

"We, the Peoples" can lead to reflections on a totally different side of the United Nations reality as well. I, for one, would take this opportunity to argue in favour of closer ties between the United Nations and the private sector.

In 1945 the world was run by States. The Charter hinges on that very assumption. It covers all aspects of life as they were prevalent at the time, from peace and security to social justice, from economic cooperation to human rights. Despite its ambition, the Charter hardly mentions any other actors besides States. Non-governmental organizations appear in the Charter only once. The private sector is not referred to at all. In other words, the Charter conforms to a model of governance as old as the Peace of Westphalia, a state system going back to the mid-1600s.

In order to strategize for the future, we need to ask ourselves: who, in actual fact, runs the world today; where and how are world affairs conducted; and how can we position the United Nations accordingly?

The United Nations is made up of Member States. That is fitting and proper. States will be the custodians of foreign relations for a long time to come. But their roles have changed significantly with time. States can no longer be thought of as the hard billiard balls of international relations. Internationalization has altered the concept of sovereignty. Nor are Sates autonomous entities as before, pursuing self-defined national interests. Their actions are now much more shaped by economic pressures, information flows, and population movements. For States, too, globalization is here to stay. Other actors have entered both the domestic and international scenes. Civil society is one. The private sector is another. Since 1945, civil society, made up of non-profit organizations, has blossomed along a wide spectrum, beyond any expectation of the United Nations founding fathers. Many non-governmental organizations operate across national boundaries. At the present time, the United Nations system could never hope to operate properly without the assistance of non-governmental organizations, not to mention normative thinking and advocacy. Non-governmental organizations have acquired access to the United Nations at different levels, and participate in many of its discussions.

Although a potent actor on the domestic and international levels, the private sector has been virtually ignored by traditional United Nations diplomacy. The business community, and notably transnational corporations, were viewed by many as the competitor, if not as the enemy of international public interest. Documents critical of multinationals were being issued by the United Nations and the specialized agencies until recently. Confrontation rather than dialogue. I am not contending that there were no grounds for that position: quite the contrary. However, nowadays we see a growing awareness in the business community of the necessity of responsible corporate policies and of a role for private enterprise in the pursuit of interests that go beyond maximizing immediate profits. As an example, I refer to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, in which the pharmaceutical industry closely cooperates with international organizations, Governments and other actors.

We need to build on that. Indeed, the time has come to expand the concept of a partnership with the private sector. Why? Two reasons. First of all, the world is up against incredible odds and, secondly, the private sector does exist and wields a lot of power in the international arena.

About the odds: take a sustainable future, where elementary laws of ecology must be respected. Not even the most powerful Government can put a stop to global warming — nor all the Member States of the United Nations combined. A sustainable future needs to be pursued in conjunction with industry, civil society and the scientific community. For equitable working conditions, and other forms of social justice, States need to involve the private sector. The same is true for fighting corruption, the spread of small arms, wasting water or AIDS.

We have truly entered an era that is very different from the one in which the United Nations was born — an era in which the course of humanity and the quality of life on earth have more and more become a shared responsibility; an era where Governments, the private sector and civil society are drawn ever more closely together. They all have a stake in global governance. The so-called global public goods are a matter for all of them together.

The private sector has a stake in the future of the planet, too. Of course, it is here to do business. But no planet, no profit. Companies should find it in their own interest to assume a responsibility equal to their weight in international relations and the influence they have at

the domestic level. Chief executive officers, too, want a livable world for their grandchildren. The private sector must be called upon to enter into a responsible corporate partnership in sync with other actors at the international plane. True, the role of each actor needs to be different. Their motivation can remain different, too — as does the legal basis on which they act. But their determination needs to be the same: the determination to secure the longevity of life as we know it and to secure for everyone on the planet an equitable share of its bounty.

Different roles, shared responsibility. That concept needs to take root in this Organization as well. The United Nations cannot credibly hope to play a galvanizing role in meeting the challenges of the coming century if it cannot show that its debates and its action platforms reflect the real world outside the conference rooms. If we want to see the United Nations as "unique in world affairs" — as the Millennium report puts it — it must be able to show that all players are on the stage.

The Secretary-General's Global Compact could not have come at a more opportune moment. It is the mere beginning of a process, but it is off to a promising start. The Global Compact deserves the active support of the international community, and it deserves to be joined by other multinationals. I do understand the trepidations of some non-governmental organizations who fear that multinational corporations will drape themselves in the United Nations flag and become untouchable in the pursuit of profit. I understand, too, the apprehension felt by diplomats in this hall, who have a lifetime invested in the exclusivity of the State and its monopoly on multilateral discourse. But the Global Compact is not a Trojan horse.

And I will go even further. We have given civil society structural access to the United Nations system. By contrast, the access we are giving to the private sector, with the notable exception of the International Labour Organization, has been ad hoc, not structural. In the future, we must create appropriate channels of communication with the private sector, inside this Organization, where they, as well as Governments and civil society, can try and get a hold on the convulsions of our time — a forum where, at the very least, they can deliberate and begin to break down the barriers of mistrust that have divided them for so long.

That is the first reason why the United Nations needs to broaden its scope and become more inclusive. The second is the power of the private sector. Many companies have turnovers larger than the national budgets of some Member States, and the same is true for the personal fortunes of some chief executive officers. The relationship between States and the private sector has altered dramatically over time. States were once thought of as bulwarks against harmful economic impact from abroad. Economic weight was viewed as a trump card in the power play among nations. Today, States are increasingly serving as instruments for adjusting domestic policy to the realities of the present-day world economy. They have become intermediaries between the world economy, with its own structure of power, and domestic societies.

This brings up the question of where world affairs are being conducted and how they have caused a shift in the style of diplomacy. Economic globalization has shifted the focus of attention to forums other than the United Nations here in New York, notably to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and, on a regional level, the European Union. Policies are tested in the margins of the World Economic Forum in Davos or decided elsewhere. Brussels has become a hub of world affairs. That focus has brought on a different cast of players than in the days of Talleyrand and Metternich. Foreign Ministers now work shoulder to shoulder not only with development ministers, but also with finance and trade ministers, as well as with central bankers. International affairs, whether we like it or not, are increasingly about economics.

Forging a relationship with the private sector is therefore indispensable if the United Nations wants to preserve its relevance over the long haul. The multilateral system, for its part, must seek closer ties with other centres of power and with the business community. Mr. Kofi Annan has been vigorously pursuing closer relations with all these various forums, and we encourage him to do more of the same.

Responsible corporate partnership is also about protecting the weak. The United Nations was set up not only to guarantee peace and security, but also to secure freedom from want. Despite its obvious advantages, globalization is leaving too many victims by the wayside. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen, and the poor suffer the most, in war and in peace. Meanwhile, the private sector wields

a great deal of power in its decisions as to where it will buy, sell and invest. Those decisions may bear directly on the quality of life in many developing countries.

Even though the odds are staggering, the United Nations system can make a difference in reducing poverty, gender inequality and child and maternal mortality. But it can make a difference only from a position of strength and from a platform shared by other actors at the international level: from a position of shared responsibility. The Millennium Summit has declared poverty eradication the United Nations number one priority. We applaud that. But fighting poverty is not only a moral imperative, as it always has been; it has also become an economic one. That is another reason for the United Nations to become more inclusive of the private sector.

The Secretary-General's report (A/54/2000), "We the peoples", duly poses the question of how to take the United Nations forward. Whatever the way forward, it needs to be a bold one. For too long we have been remoulding old ideas. While doing so, we have kept the United Nations on a very short leash, hardly allowing it to stray off the beaten path. More of the same is not enough. In other words, the United Nations is bound to miss its cue if we, the peoples, pursue our business as usual. The future will pass us by.

The alternative is an avenue that is much more ambitious. It amounts to using the United Nations system as a vehicle for the development of a new vision of world politics, a vision for the "post-Westphalian" era. In such a vision, present trends would be given legitimacy and a conceptual framework. In such a vision, the principle of non-intervention yields to the defence of human rights; sovereignty is further reappraised; there is room for civil society and the private sector; and economics are also held responsible for social and development goals. Such is the road less travelled, but the only one that can make all the difference.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Mr. Belkhadem (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like first of all, on my own behalf and that of the Algerian delegation, to convey to Mr. Holkeri heartfelt congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I wish him every success in discharging his noble duties. The choice of Mr. Holkeri as President is a tribute to his personal qualities and to the experience of his country, Finland, with which we enjoy a firm friendship.

I should also like to take this opportunity to convey to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, our deep appreciation and gratitude for the great effort he made during his presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

Finally, I should like to salute the spirit of initiative and commitment shown by our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the head of the Secretariat, and commend his sincere and tireless work to reform the Organization and to give it a new dynamism so as to prepare it to meet the challenge of the enormous changes in international relations.

I should also like to welcome the State of Tuvalu as a new Member of our Organization.

Just a few days ago, the United Nations hosted a political event that was without precedent since the Organization was created: the Millennium Summit. Because of a host of fast-paced developments that occurred in international relations, we, the peoples of the United Nations, must take time at this juncture of history to organize a dialogue to discuss the shape of the new emerging world order and the effects on us, the peoples, the States and the United Nations, the repository of our collective hopes and aspirations.

The world has changed in a very short time from a system with clearly defined parameters to a system where political and economic reference points are sorely lacking. It is a system defined by nebulous phenomena, which evolve according to rules set by forces that refuse, in the name of globalization, to accept any form of guidance or collective democratic oversight. It is no surprise that globalization is increasing the suspicions and fears of the developing countries vis-à-vis the evolving new world order. The current state of international relations, marked by injustice and imbalance, will inevitably get worse because of the unbridled process of globalization.

It is because of this that the Millennium Summit forcefully proclaimed the need to reinvigorate the United Nations and to galvanize its role, since it is the

refuge of the weak and the marginalized. The massive presence of the leaders of the whole world at the Summit was irrefutable proof of the commitment of the peoples and nations of the world to the United Nations and to the principles and purposes it embodies. The United Nations is the only forum built on the ideals and reference points shared by mankind as a whole, marked by universality and globality in its missions and prerogatives.

Certainly the United Nations is facing today new challenges caused by rapid, profound and sometimes surprising changes in international affairs. No one denies the fact that it needs to be radically reformed in order to prepare it and adapt it effectively to meet current and future challenges and to manage and redress the contradictions of international relations.

Security Council reform and expansion of its membership are urgent matters, because this important body clearly lacks the necessary representativity to give legitimacy and efficiency to its decisions and actions.

Likewise, consolidation of democracy and international relations, if it is to be truly meaningful, must involve the enhancement of the General Assembly and the establishment of its role as the principal source of international law, as well as oversight over the three principal organs, in keeping with the United Nations Charter. Accordingly, marginalization of the Assembly, when it comes to major questions such as the maintenance of international peace and security, does not in any way allow the overwhelming majority of nations to contribute to the decision-making process in international affairs.

Opening the United Nations to the outside world is a necessity dictated by changes in the international community and the demands of our times. By involving civil society in its work, the United Nations will benefit from the considerable contribution that non-governmental partners can provide in meeting the needs of countries in matters of development, particularly in the areas of education, health and housing. But this partnership cannot be at the expense of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, nor the independence of its decisions.

It is in the context of this vision that we state our position on humanitarian intervention. For us it is a question not of whether or not it is acceptable to intervene in humanitarian disasters, but, rather, of legal and political parameters that should govern any decision on this matter. We therefore demand that terms of reference be clearly and precisely established, that they should be democratically adopted in a context of transparency and that they should effectively reflect the will of the community of nations. They must be based on principles of solidarity and justice, ruling out any forms of selectivity, special treatment or double standards.

Experience has shown that the international community has found in the United Nations a framework that allows for considerable progress to be made with regard to security and cooperation. In the area of disarmament, for example, thanks to the available frameworks for negotiation and dialogue, the Organization has been able to realize considerable achievements, such as the signing of many conventions on weapons of mass destruction and the success of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), presided over by Algeria.

The United Nations has also provided a framework to coordinate international efforts to deal with new dangers that pose a threat to international peace and security, such as terrorism, organized crime, and drug and arms trafficking. On the subject of terrorism, the international community has embarked on a process of implementing its strategy to combat this scourge and to prevent it. The United Nations and regional groups have adopted legal instruments that supplement international laws dealing with anti-terrorist actions. We hope that these achievements will be enhanced by the adoption of a comprehensive international convention, to be considered a political, legal and moral international covenant, to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Algeria is keen that its relations within its political and geographical spheres be governed by a vision of the future that goes beyond short-term interactions or ephemeral motives. In our policy towards the peoples and countries with which we have relations of neighbourliness, geography and common heritage, we want to consolidate the principle of dialogue and consultation and develop cooperation and solidarity in keeping with the demands of good neighbourliness, common destiny, mutual interest, mutual trust and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Regarding the Arab Maghreb region, Algeria's commitment to build a unified, stable and prosperous Maghreb is based on our conviction that Maghreb unity is a strategic option dictated by the aspirations of the peoples of the region and by the current international situation, which encourages integration and the formation of blocs. Algeria is prepared today to work with its Maghreb partners to reactivate the process on the basis of an objective thorough analysis of common Maghreb action according to a rigorous and pragmatic methodology that seeks to maximize the complementarities of the countries of the region and that ensures gradual integration, taking into account the principles of equity and balance of interests.

It is on the basis of this vision that Algeria has spared no effort to help find a just and lasting solution to the problem of Western Sahara. Algeria's support for the United Nations settlement plan is based on our commitment to preserve the security and stability of the region, without, however, rejecting the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination. The settlement plan, which was supported by both sides — Morocco and the POLISARIO Front — and by the international community, remains the practical, realistic option that will guarantee a just and lasting solution to this issue. Today the settlement plan is at a delicate stage, and the international community, which has already made a considerable effort to implement it, must give it even more attention and more support. Thanks to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, and the cooperation of both sides, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has resolved the difficulties that for so long prevented implementation of the plan. Today, there is no reason to delay or to block the referendum process.

My country is convinced of the interdependence of the interests of the States and peoples on both shores of the Mediterranean Sea. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to the Euro-Mediterranean process, which provides a promising framework for the promotion of dialogue and consultation among the countries of the region and opens up great prospects for understanding, intercultural exchange and improvement of partnership for the benefit of all peoples.

The Middle East region has seen some developments this year that have had an important impact on the peace process. The question of Palestine, which is at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is at a delicate stage. That means that the international community must mobilize even further in order to move the peace talks forward. Algeria reiterates its support for the Palestinian people and salutes their struggle for recovering their legitimate rights, including the right to establish their own independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

Algeria would also like to reaffirm its support for the fraternal Syrian people and its right to recover the occupied Golan.

We express our profound satisfaction and pride at Lebanon's regaining its sovereignty over all its territory.

Algeria once again reaffirms the need to lift the embargo that has hit the fraternal Iraqi people so hard.

We also call for a final lifting of the sanctions that continue to penalize the fraternal peoples of Libya and the Sudan.

Africa is undergoing profound changes that are opening up new vistas for the peoples and countries of that continent. Those changes have been brought about by the serious and determined will of Africans to free themselves from the burdens of the past and by their aspiration to join in the process of change that is sweeping our world today. Democracy is gaining ground daily as the mode of governance for the vast majority of societies in Africa. The State of law and respect for human rights are becoming embedded in African societies. That tendency is strikingly reflected in the historic decision by the 1999 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government no longer to recognize any anti-constitutional changes. That was a promising sign for the establishment of a democratic culture in Africa.

At the economic level, African countries have wasted no time in joining the world trend towards a market economy and in creating the necessary conditions to promote free trade and investment.

With regard to the conflicts that have devastated the continent and continue to cause humanitarian disasters and to tarnish Africa's prestige, the continent's leaders are now using preventive diplomacy and their own skills in mediating and settling conflict. Along the same lines, the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is being reinforced as the authority of reference to provide a framework for dialogue and conflict

prevention. As a result of those efforts, we see signs of easing in various conflicts in some parts of Africa. Through its chairmanship of the OAU last year, my country made great efforts to resolve some of those conflicts and to limit their scale.

Algeria's efforts were successful in the case of the conflict between two neighbours, Ethiopia and Eritrea, where the Algiers Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities doused the fire of that destructive war between two fraternal peoples. The Agreement now offers real prospects for a just and lasting settlement of the border dispute between the two countries.

Algeria has also stepped up its initiatives to end the conflict in the sisterly nation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In coordination and consultation with the countries of the region concerned and with the United Nations, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has intensified his efforts with the parties, urging them to find a peaceful and negotiated solution in order to spare the peoples of that country any further suffering and preserve its unity and territorial integrity. Today, more than a year since the Lusaka Agreement, we can only view with regret the reversals that have taken place in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those setbacks have led to a deferment by the United Nations of the deployment of its peacekeeping mission.

UNITA's continued defiance of the international community in Angola and its failure to comply with the commitments it made in the peace process continue to inflict the disastrous consequences of an endless war on the people of Angola. While reaffirming UNITA's responsibility for the ongoing war in that country, we note with satisfaction the new effectiveness of sanctions on that rebel group. We reiterate the need for complete compliance by any means necessary to make the rebel elements comply with international law and honour their commitments under the Lusaka Agreement.

The solidarity expressed by the international community for the efforts of the leaders of Sierra Leone to restore peace and security must be accompanied by a tough attitude towards the criminal elements guilty of murder and despicable acts against civilians. Those acts have not spared even members of the United Nations Mission.

While we reaffirm the fundamental role of the United Nations and the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, we continue to stress the need for the Security Council to demonstrate the same effectiveness and speed of action with regard to conflicts in Africa as it does in connection with conflicts in other regions of the world. In that regard, I would like to express our desire that the General Assembly give the necessary attention and in-depth consideration to the Brahimi report's recommendations on peacekeeping operations, and that it implement those recommendations so as to make the United Nations more effective in this essential area of maintaining international peace and security.

The contrasts that exist in today's world can be seen very clearly in the economic and social situation of the world. Humanity has never before achieved such a level of technological development. That development now makes it possible to meet basic human needs economically, socially and culturally. However, some segments of humanity continue to suffer the most abject forms of poverty and destitution. The Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Summit contains a clear formulation of those contradictions, which do us no credit as a civilized society that aspires to preserve human dignity and to protect the rights of those whose rights have been wrested from them.

Mr. Kofi Annan also recognized in his report that the benefits of globalization remain limited to a small group of people. That fact reinforces our conviction of the need to accelerate the restructuring of international relations and our insistence on the need for a serious and comprehensive dialogue between the North and the South to find solutions for the imbalances that exist in the international financial and trade systems.

It is time to tackle international economic relations from the standpoint of humankind's needs and dignity rather than from the standpoint of market forces alone, because experience has proved that such forces do not accord the necessary importance to social issues. If there is one area in which we must translate into reality the values of solidarity upon which the United Nations was founded and the interdependence which marks international relations, it is that of combating poverty, ignorance and epidemics.

Effective and unified tackling of the problem of sustainable development in the third world necessarily entails settling the problem of debt, reviving cooperation for development, promoting investments

and opening up the markets of the North to the products and commodities of the South.

We are meeting today for the last session of the General Assembly in our century, which has been marked by many events, a century in which the horror of destructive wars was mingled with the joy of peace and détente, a century marked by a struggle between hope and resignation, where it became evident that people are at once capable of the most abject acts and the most useful kinds of actions.

We leave behind a century and usher in another, hopeful that humankind will learn from the past and will demonstrate the necessary determination to avoid making the same mistakes, for which we have paid such a high price.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Roberto Rojas López, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica.

Mr. Rojas López (Costa Rica) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri on his well-deserved election to preside over the work of the General Assembly, which attests both to his outstanding personal qualities and to the admiration that the international community has for his country, Finland. Allow me also to express our gratitude to the outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for his excellent work.

Just a week ago, in this same Hall, our heads of State or Government held the Millennium Summit. That historic event served as the framework for an in-depth consideration of the role of the United Nations in the next century and for the reiteration, at the highest political level, of the universal support for this Organization.

It is now up to us to elaborate on our leaders' observations and determine what is necessary to build a more prosperous future, a more just society and an increasingly human civilization.

At the outset of the new millennium, scientific and technological achievements in all fields are allowing us to glimpse an ever-brighter future. However, a double threat exists to progress towards that goal. On one hand, it is endangered by uneven growth, which threatens to deepen the divide between the wealthiest and the poorest. More effective measures must be adopted to create a more just and equitable society and international community.

On the other hand, the future is also threatened by the temptation of absolute materialism, which can be understood as the danger of reducing development to the mere satisfaction of material needs. The risk of transforming the human being into a commodity and the temptation to seek wealth instead of happiness represent a continuing threat. We must establish a new society whose goal should be the promotion of the well-being of all, as reflected in their full physical, intellectual and spiritual development. We must create a society centred on ideas, creativity and abilities, and not on power or wealth.

The United Nations can and should play a central role in the construction of this new society. However, we must note, honestly and courageously, that so far the United Nations and the international community as a whole have been held back by innumerable constraints and restrictions and known many failures.

More than 50 years ago, at the founding of this Organization, we committed ourselves to eradicating the scourge of war, and we undertook to promote social progress and better living conditions for all.

Unfortunately, though, to date, the United Nations has been unable to respond fully to these pleas. We react to political and military crises with hollow statements to the press. We condemn gross violations of human rights with procedural resolutions, which are then forgotten on our shelves. We create organs, committees and tribunals without any real capacity for action and lacking the necessary resources to fulfil their mandates. We convene summits, conferences and meetings that limit themselves to repeating empty declarations and passing commitments. We send military observers who are unable to maintain peace because we do not provide them with the necessary resources or political support. Over and over again we adopt inadequate measures to resolve crises, hoping that they will perform miracles. We send international experts with development programmes that respond neither to the needs nor the desires of their recipients. This Organization has imposed sanctions that affect innocent civilians while at the same time inadvertently strengthening criminal regimes.

We recognize, of course, that many of the United Nations activities have been successful and praiseworthy. We cannot overlook the work of the

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in favour of victims of war and of children, nor can we forget the heroic sacrifice of many Blue Helmets and humanitarian personnel. We must always keep in mind the valuable mediation efforts and good offices provided to defuse armed conflicts. We must learn from those peacekeeping operations that have been crowned with success in spite of all of the difficulties. We must recall and respect the gradual codification of human rights and of the need to provide the highest possible standards of living.

But the world expects greater leadership from the United Nations. The world's peoples are calling for firm and decisive action on the part of the international community. Humanity is looking to us to fulfil the lofty goals that we set for ourselves when we founded this Organization.

For these reasons, new bases must be established for the actions of the United Nations. The Organization must be provided with a renewed political and philosophical paradigm that will enable it to garner the political and material support it needs from all States in order effectively to achieve its goals.

Today the United Nations requires all of our support. Each one of us is obliged, individually and collectively, to provide the best living conditions possible to all our fellow citizens.

The primary objective of the United Nations in the twenty-first century must be to promote full respect for human rights. More than 50 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the continuing violation of those rights, through inexcusable killings for political, religious or ethnic motives and through the displacement of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, is a matter for profound concern. We are distressed also by the fact that thousands perish daily of starvation or easily curable diseases. We are concerned at the fact that thousands of persons are still persecuted or incarcerated because of their political opinions and that for those reasons hundreds are subject to the most degrading torture or are forced to live in extreme poverty.

The persistence of war is the cause of inexcusable atrocities and recurrent humanitarian crisis. The true victims of war are not the fallen soldiers but the displaced or refugee children and elderly, the women who are raped, the young people who are murdered, the mothers who lose their incomes, the innocent workers whose workplaces are destroyed, the students whose schools are bombed, the sick who cannot go to hospital because there are no bridges and no medicines. In the contemporary world, every armed conflict, every civil war, every massive violation of human rights, every humanitarian emergency, caused either by man or by nature, calls for coordinated international action through this Organization.

In that context, all States must politically and financially support United Nations activities to eradicate the scourge of war. The Organization must regain leadership in maintaining international peace and security. It is imperative that all States strictly adhere to the prohibition of the use of force.

For those reasons, one of our tasks is to revitalize the Security Council in order to increase its legitimacy and its capacity for action. That organ should never transfer, abandon or renounce its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. To the contrary, it is essential to ensure that it can perform its functions satisfactorily by providing it with the necessary resources and political support.

The Security Council cannot renounce its role simply because it is unable to find a quick or inexpensive solution to a crisis. We cannot accept the establishment of peacekeeping operations that lack personnel and resources to the point of being irrelevant. Nor can we accept the dispatch of personnel who lack training or motivation and who become easy victims of conflicts. By no means can we consent to the imposition of sanctions regimes that affect innocent populations. When establishing a peacekeeping mission, the Security Council must define realistic goals, so that mandates and resources will be commensurate with the actual requirements of the crisis it is to face.

Armed conflicts and political crises are multifaceted phenomena. Every emergency situation presents a series of political, military and economic problems. True peace can be attained only when all individuals enjoy proper living conditions, when they possess a sufficiently high level of economic development to meet their basic needs, when their fundamental human rights are respected and when their interests and individual rights are guaranteed by democratic means.

True peace requires a culture and a climate that foster mutual respect and that categorically reject violence. In order to achieve peace, we must create a culture of peace. With a view to creating such a culture of peace, the United Nations must promote not only peace but also social justice, democracy and development. This should actively involve the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme. We advocate in particular the strengthening of the role of the Economic and Social Council so that it can effectively monitor and coordinate the implementation of the economic, social, cultural and environmental activities of the United Nations and of all its organs.

In this regard, international cooperation plays a central role in supporting local initiatives for development, democratization and the promotion of human rights. Unfortunately, we are witnessing a decrease in international assistance in these fields while the demand continues to grow. To address this situation, each nation has to take into its own hands the task of creating the conditions necessary to attain peace, development and justice.

We believe that only if human rights are fully respected will it be possible to create and sustain the conditions necessary for the full development of all men and women. The promotion of democracy and social and economic development are also indispensable instruments to generate the material, social and spiritual conditions required for this comprehensive development.

Our experience has taught us that only democracy can provide the necessary framework for the full respect of human rights. Only democracy which grants all citizens equal rights and opportunities to participate in the political process can secure true peace. Only a democratic system which bestows on all people equal opportunities to enjoy the benefits of economic development and personal accomplishment will make possible sustainable and just development. For that reason, we celebrate the democratic consolidation that, thanks to recent elections after a long period under the same ruling party, is being enjoyed by Mexico and by the Republic of China in Taiwan — which deserves an appropriate place in international forums.

Additionally, our own national evolution has taught us that the first step in such a policy is the elimination or reduction of military budgets. Costa Rica abolished its army more than 50 years ago and has since been free from armed conflict with its neighbours and from military oppression of its population. Reduction of military expenditure is especially valuable for developing States whose resources are limited and cannot be mismanaged. In that context, armies are a heavy burden on national budgets and a constant source of tension and repression. Would it not be better to devote to health the $191 billion that developing countries waste on their armed forces? Would it not be preferable to allocate to education the $22 billion dollars that are spent in arms transfers to the third world? Our historical experience has made us a witness to and an example of the multifaceted and positive relationship between disarmament and development.

The second step on the path to peace and development is to devote as many resources as possible to education and health. Only an educated people can live in freedom; only a healthy people can work for development; only a cultured people can be a part of the contemporary globalized world. For those reasons, we must invest intensively and systematically in our human resources while also striving for economic development, social justice and the institutionalization of democracy.

The third step towards the future is to secure respect for human rights and democracy to enable peoples to choose freely their own destinies and to facilitate the coordination of all of society's actors. In my country, we have deeply committed ourselves to those principles, both in the national sphere through constitutional provisions, and in the international arena through various international conventions and treaties.

In this regard, the issue of migrations is of the greatest importance to my country. Costa Rica has given emphasis to the need to relocate the nationals of each country peacefully and in an orderly fashion to satisfy their specific immigration and emigration needs; to the movements of qualified human resources to promote economic, social and cultural progress in the receiving countries; and to the orderly reintegration and resettlement of persons who, for one reason or another, have been obliged to abandon their country or place of origin or who have been forced to leave a nation that did not allow them to exercise their right

not to emigrate. Therefore, we appreciate the key role played by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and we advocate in particular that States that have not yet done so make the necessary amendments to their domestic legislation in order to guarantee this right to all human beings.

There are three main elements in the process of development that we believe require greater attention. First, we should reconstruct society and its values, especially through a renewed effort to acknowledge and protect the value of the family in its role as society's basic cell. Unfortunately, the family is the first victim of political and economic crisis, thus forcing its dissolution by the scattering of its members. For this reason, we must emphasize that families are the schools where the basic values of coexistence and respect for the dignity of all other persons are taught, and that, without them, it is impossible to create a stable society.

Secondly, it is necessary to make greater efforts to pursue sustainable development in all areas of human endeavour. In this sense, we are pleased to report that Costa Rica has achieved significant advances in the environmental field regarding the preservation of its rich biodiversity and the promotion of development in harmony with nature. We are one of the first nations to have undertaken carbon fixation and the sale of oxygen as an additional source of income for development, on the basis of the sustainable use of our forests and recognition of the economic value of the environmental services that they provide to all humanity. In the same vein, we have incorporated the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol into our domestic legal system. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go towards fully sustainable development.

Similarly, Costa Rica is honoured to be the headquarters of the Earth Council and the University for Peace, which are working jointly to promote a concept of development in greater harmony with the environment. We are confident that the University for Peace, in particular, can play a constructive role both in the promotion of sustainable development as in the creation of a culture of peace. Thanks to the work of its new Council and in particular Mr. Maurice Strong, who presides over it, that institution can count on my Government's unwavering support.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our pledge to offer our country as the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests. We are confident that this new organ will finally secure the international community's coordinated and comprehensive action with respect to forests.

Thirdly, it is necessary to ensure that economic development is sustainable. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to modify the international economic order, with a view to making it more just and balanced, so that it can grant to the smaller developing countries greater access to the benefits of the globalization process and the opportunities for development that it creates. Open commercial mechanisms enabling commerce and investment to be engines for economic growth should be established. In a parallel, we should target our developmental policies towards more efficient use of the digital revolution, which provides us with many opportunities to compete in the global market and to increase our production. In short, we must democratize globalization.

We believe that knowledge and opportunities to access information and the new technologies are essential today to generate well-being. In today's world, marked by new technological frontiers, our endeavours should also be directed towards narrowing the digital divide. We should seek to provide more just and equitable access to the opportunities open to us in order to transform economic and social activities. In accordance with this thesis, Costa Rica recently initiated the programme "Communications without frontiers", becoming the first nation to provide free e-mail to all its population.

Democracy, sustainable development and human rights constitute the three fundamental elements upon which the United Nations action must be based, as well as that of each of our nations. None is an end in itself; rather they are only a means to secure better living conditions for all people. The true goal of our action centres on the human being; it is to guarantee greater happiness for all persons, the greatest respect for their dignity and the necessary conditions for their full physical, intellectual and spiritual development.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I call next on His Excellency, Mr. Petre Roman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Roman (Romania) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I am delighted to extend to Mr. Harri Holkeri, the new

President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, my sincere congratulations on his election.

I warmly welcome Tuvalu, the latest newcomer to the United Nations family.

I cannot continue without expressing my sincere appreciation to our dedicated Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, under whose leadership the winds of change keep on blowing.

I hail the results of the Millennium Summit. The views expressed by leaders from all over the world have shown how crucial it is, at this point in history, to reshape our Organization so as to respond adequately to the great challenges of our times.

From this rostrum, and in other forums, political leaders have endeavoured to describe their perceptions, expectations and concerns with regard to the all-encompassing manifestations of globalization. Last year, my predecessor stated that the United Nations was all about institutionalized solidarity. Bearing this idea in mind, we are convinced that the United Nations should reshape its role in such a way as to manage globalization in the interest of all nations and to correct its excesses.

Globalization creates opportunities for commercial, economic and financial expansion. However, improved technological competitiveness and wider economic freedom do not automatically produce greater equity.

The contribution of globalization to the betterment of the human condition will remain limited to a small number of individuals, social categories and countries unless it is oriented towards the common good. This implies that, in the new context of integration and participation in the globalization processes, good governance should intelligently and predictably combine economic reforms with social responsibility, adjust the system of education and professional training, and initiate institutional reforms that are able to achieve long-term internal stability and employment, individual security and social justice, and the protection of national economic interests, resources and the environment.

The process of globalization creates a new balance of power between States, non-governmental organizations and transnational corporations. What is in question today is how to use their potential in order to influence the course of globalization so that it can have a much more positive impact on people's lives. This means bringing globalization closer to the people by promoting human values and democratic principles and practices; an open, inclusive and pluralistic political culture; economies that sustain a decent life for all citizens and prosperity for societies as a whole; and institutions that protect both individuals, with all their rights and fundamental freedoms, and the common good. Nothing can really benefit the citizens of a country if, at the same time, it prejudices the prevailing international standards of a democratic world.

(spoke in French)

We need to pool our efforts in order to enlarge the system of values shared by the international community. In this globalized yet conflictual world, the manifestation of solidarity can provide a sound basis for progress and prosperity for individuals and nations. From this perspective, I am convinced that solidarity in the creation and allocation of educational capital is essential for the access of young people to the opportunities for progress engendered by globalization. I strongly support better access for young people to the new technologies based on information and communication through investments in informatics education, based on firm partnerships among Governments, business communities and non-governmental organizations. In coping with the new informatics reality of globalization, good governance has to act with vision, responsibility and solidarity. Access to educational capital in computer sciences should not create new demarcation lines across the planet, but rather should unite the world, primarily young people, by providing new opportunities for progress, communication and professional success. Access to digital education will also mean civic emancipation, greater transparency and less corruption.

The first key word — solidarity — that I have tried to illustrate should be accompanied by a second: responsibility. For the United Nations as a whole and for its Member States, responsibility is another way to react to the forces of globalization, both domestically and internationally. That is why Romania welcomes the set of priorities and recommendations formulated by the Secretary-General in his report to the Millennium Assembly.

Member States know that responsibility requires them to give the Organization — in what I would call a

"peace ritual" — the political support and concrete means necessary to improve the management of globalization and to fulfil its mandate. This role is not an easy one. In an era of the most advanced technological capabilities, poverty continues to be a painful reality. While there is increasing acceptance of the universality of human rights, innocent people continue to fall victim to inter-ethnic wars. In fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, States find that the perpetrators are as well-armed as their police forces. The lack of determination or promptness in preventing the degradation of the environment endangers life on our planet. The United Nations must strive to give globalization a human face.

Within our own Organization, responsibility also means that we have to strengthen the authority of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security; pursue the process of reforming the Security Council, once we have agreed that an increase in its membership is justified; be more effective in assisting Member States to cope with their serious economic and social problems; and enhance the Organization's capacity to mount and deploy peace missions on a timely basis.

In recent years, we have witnessed the increasing role of non-governmental organizations and other non-state actors, in particular the powerful transnational corporations. There is a need for them to assume increased responsibility as well. Non-governmental organizations should be prepared to mobilize more effectively the resources of civil society in the service of the public well-being.

As for the transnational corporations, we are aware of their role in stimulating the forces of globalization and also in reaping its fruit. It is only fair for them to assume responsibilities beyond the borders of their profit. There is a long way to go, so it is high time to set out in this particular direction.

The Global Compact initiative launched by the Secretary-General should be built upon. In Romania, we have already explored its potential and the results are promising. We believe, indeed, that the business community can enhance support and enact a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards and environmental protection. After all, profit is meaningless if it does not lead to the improvement of the human condition for all.

(spoke in English)

We believe that all Member States, including Romania, can assume a share of the collective responsibility. Indeed, my country is doing its best to make its own contribution to the goals and purposes of the United Nations. First, Romania is party to the majority of the key multilateral treaties and conventions identified as such by the Secretary-General in the context of the Millennium Summit.

Secondly, we submitted a valuable resolution, entitled "Promoting and consolidating democracy", that was adopted by the Commission on Human Rights on 25 April this year. Encouraged by its success, we will invite the General Assembly to adopt this resolution at the current session. We are convinced that all members of the General Assembly are prepared to reiterate their recognition of the values, principles and practices that give meaning to a democratic society.

Thirdly, Romania is a strong supporter of the United Nations role in peacekeeping. Our peacekeepers have served in various places where we had no specific national interest other than maintaining peace on behalf of the world and of the innocent people who make up the majority of victims of conflicts and disputes. We have worked hard to diversify our contribution to peacekeeping. Romania is also proud to be part of the first Multinational Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade. That is a clear way of expressing support for enhancing the United Nations capacity to deploy peacekeepers rapidly and effectively. In the same context, we welcome the work of the Panel on United Nations peace operations, which has provided a convincing outline for an important reform of this particular function.

Fourthly, we also believe that the time has come for us to try to review the peacekeeping scale of assessments. As a concrete contribution to this effort, I take this opportunity to announce that Romania is willing to gradually move from Group C to Group B of the assessment mechanism for peacekeeping. We appeal to all Member countries to work together to put an end to the current financial crisis.

Fifthly, in the same vein, let me emphasize that Romania has increased its voluntary contribution to the United Nations Development Programme's work in our country. This is one way of reiterating our support for and interest in the operational activities of the United Nations.

We have always supported creative and efficient forms of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. I am pleased to announce to this audience that Romania is preparing to take over the high responsibility of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2001. We will work hard to make OSCE a more instrumental organization, based upon a specific commitment to improving the life of the citizens of its 54 participating States. At the same time, we will use to its best the potential for dialogue and cooperation between OSCE and the United Nations in conflict-prevention and crisis management, in strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, in fighting corruption and in other realms of common interest.

Having said this, I would make a plea to Member States to integrate the two essential ingredients for effective action, namely solidarity and responsibility, into the concept of total diplomacy. This means the systematic use of firm and efficient diplomacy that should be called upon before any dangerous tensions burst into conflict. It also means that we should give absolute priority to diplomacy, prevention and containment, and in all circumstances use them extensively and comprehensively for the pacific settlements of disputes. All of the means provided for in Chapter VI of the Charter and others that might be created through our collective effort of imagination should reinforce the Organization's capacity to cope with threats and conflicts, whether predictable or unpredictable.

Recent developments in longstanding conflicts and disputes confirm that at the end of any road paved with a heavy toll in human lives, material destruction and distorted mentalities, one can find a negotiating table. Diplomacy, if used up to the point of exhaustion, can eventually prove decisive, provided all the possibilities of statesmen, professional negotiators, public opinion and civil society are comprehensively mobilized. Intense dialogue, diplomacy and flexibility from all parties are still needed in critical points of the world, such as Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) of the Security Council is a remarkable innovation, which combines the specific capabilities of the United Nations and some prominent regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. Let us work together, guided by resolution 1244, to use the diplomatic and material potential of these organizations with full positive impact on all the inhabitants of this province, irrespective of ethnic background or religion.

I address the same appeal to responsibility to the parties involved in the Transdneister tension problem, with the hope that the commitments assumed during the OSCE Summit in Istanbul will be respected, so that next year we will see concrete measures in the withdrawal of military troops and arms from this part of the Republic of Moldova.

We are aware that there are many complex and unsolved situations for which energetic enforcement is needed. We are ready to participate in a profound and responsible debate on humanitarian intervention. We would join other delegations in taking a fresh look at the use of sanctions and seeing how effective they are with respect to their target and what are the consequences on the innocent civilian population or third countries.

Among the possible consequences, it is worth mentioning the irrational retaliation reactions from countries concerned. A case in point is the perpetuation of the blocking of the Danube — the blocking of navigation on the Danube — which makes all the riparian countries suffer. Procrastination, resisting the lifting of the blockade on the Danube under various pretexts defies international law and ignores the economic interests in the region. Every day, shipping companies accumulate huge losses, which add to the already heavy burden on the third countries in the area, accumulated during the years of the Yugoslav crisis.

Speaking of the situation in the Balkans in general, we have to say that we are far from having reached complete stability. We are still witnessing confrontation between the forces of integration and those of dissolution. Time has come to get rid of the ghosts of intolerance and hatred and open the door to the fresh air of the European spirit of integration. The results of the actions by the inflexible regime in Belgrade can be clearly seen today. Unfortunately, our neighbours are forced to cope with a destroyed and isolated economy and an unpredictable political situation in a Yugoslav State once viable and respected, yet finding itself, today, in a process of dismantlement. Politics should be judged by its results, and not by its intentions. We strongly wish for Yugoslavia to return to the European mainstream, for which it must re-embrace

the values of democracy, tolerance and freedom of expression.

The historic conflict in the Middle East is not over yet, but it is diplomacy that still gives us hope for a solution. I applaud the recent efforts made by the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to come closer to a final settlement. This year we have also heard good news from the Korean Peninsula, a part of the world where history separated one people into two hostile parts. Romania is happy to see a fresh wave of diplomatic actions and human contacts that open new windows for an era of which the Korean people would be the first beneficiary.

For us it is obvious that total diplomacy can be successful if it is constantly and solidly based on human realities and on the fundamental aspiration of ordinary people to a peaceful and decent life. With the current, unprecedented level of knowledge we have reached, I am confident that we can find, in ourselves and our societies, resources for greater tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue, as opposed to the primitive inclination to hatred, intolerance and aggression.

It is incumbent to the United Nations, as the only international organization of universal vocation, to identify new resources for our concerted endeavours to find solutions to problems of global concern. I am glad to see that our position coincides in many respects with the major ideas agreed upon by participants in the Summit. The United Nations should stubbornly keep working to renew its profile and vigour while entering the new millennium. Romania will continue to be ready to add its contribution to that effect.

The Acting President (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the next speaker, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Ilah El-Khatib, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. El-Khatib (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to His Excellency on his election as President of the current session of the General Assembly, wishing him all success in conducting its deliberations and in arriving at conclusions beneficial to the international community. I would like also to express our deep thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his successful efforts in conducting the business of the fifty-fourth session. Furthermore, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of our Organization, for his report and his incessant efforts in the service of the purposes and principles of the Organization, with a view to enhancing its role and increasing its effectiveness in the international arena.

The General Assembly holds its fifty-fifth session in the wake of the Millennium Summit, which witnessed a historic meeting of world leaders held under the auspices of the United Nations. The significance and meaning of the Summit affirm the commitment of the international community to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. This should lead to the enhancement of its role as the best framework for providing Member States with suitable mechanisms to organize and regulate international relations on the basis of cooperative partnership, particularly after the end of the cold war era and its concepts of polarization and balance of power, which had in the past instituted division and confrontation, depleted huge resources and caused widespread suffering in vast areas of the world.

Since the establishment of the United Nations the world has witnessed developments that require a review of the methods and policies adopted so far. First, calls for democracy and efforts to establish it and make it a way of life within States should be consistent with the establishment of democracy in international relations and within the United Nations itself. It is not logical to continue urging and calling for the establishment of democracy on one level while rejecting it on the international arena, where in fact there is a dire need for democracy in order to achieve equality among the Members of this organization — rich and poor, strong and weak.

During the past few years the United Nations has witnessed some changes in its methods of work. First and foremost we must emphasize the need to preserve the role of the General Assembly. The power of the Security Council, the executive arm of the Assembly for peace and security issues, should not be increased at the expense of the role of the General Assembly and its various other organs, which are supposed to provide balance and collective representation of the international will.

Clearly, there is international consensus that the present composition of the Security Council does not provide equitable representation of the international community and that there is a need to correct this

situation. Since all States have expressed their positions through extended debates, the actions required have become clearer and more specific.

All Member States, both developed and developing, agree that globalization and the abolition of borders and obstacles to economic exchanges present opportunities and pose risks. Although globalization facilitates the flow of goods and services as well as of ideas, it has presented the developing world with challenges related to deepening the gap between it and the developed world, particularly in view of differences in their respective levels of scientific and technological development.

Globalization has also put the identity and sovereignty of developing States and peoples to a painful test. Additionally, it has shown how difficult it is for developing countries to meet the requirements of integration into the world economy. While a majority of developing countries were struggling to enter the industrial era, they witnessed the entry of the developed world into an era of information technology. While they were striving to provide basic services, like infrastructure, health care, social welfare and education, they witnessed the frightening acceleration of technological and economic changes — a phenomenon that thwarted their hopes of catching up with developed countries.

While globalization, openness and economic integration make the world a unified economic environment, widening differences and deepening inequalities will inescapably cause damage to all in the long run. This situation makes it imperative to reformulate economic relations on the basis of cooperation and partnership. It also requires action to reduce differences, rectify economic imbalances and help developing countries adjust their economies to meet the requirements of globalization and integration. Furthermore, the experience of mankind has proved that poverty and huge economic and social disparities have always been the root causes of instability and confrontation.

The Middle East peace process is going through an extremely sensitive phase. During the past few weeks and months, major, commendable efforts have been made to make Palestinian-Israeli negotiations bear fruit — arriving at a lasting settlement between the two parties.

Jordan has made an essential contribution in all phases of the peace process. This contribution was motivated by Jordan's conviction that peace is the only real option for all States and peoples of the region. Indeed, geographic and demographic realities make it impossible for any party to settle the conflict by imposing its will or consecrating the status quo in its favour. Therefore, there is no alternative to establishing peace on the basis of law, international legitimacy, justice and equality.

Despite the failure of the recent Camp David summit to produce an agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis, it has enabled the parties to narrow the gap dividing their positions and made the requirements for reaching a settlement clearer. This confirms the need to continue the efforts by the United States in particular and the international community in general to build on what has been achieved so far.

The achievement of lasting peace in the region requires the realization of the national rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to independence and the establishment of their State on their national territory, with the Holy City of Jerusalem as its capital.

This means reaching implementable and sustainable solutions to the main issues, which are the subject of the permanent-status negotiations. Regarding the issue of territory, Israeli forces must withdraw from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967), so that a Palestinian state may be established on those territories, with internationally recognized borders. Any security arrangements that may be agreed upon must not be based on any claim of sovereignty as a result of occupation.

The solution of the refugee problem must also be based on rules of international law and the various international conventions and on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which emphasizes the right of return and compensation to the refugees. Persons who were displaced as a result of the June 1967 war must be able to return to their homes in implementation of Security Council resolution 237 (1967).

The issue of Jerusalem is the key to peace in the region, and it must be solved on the premise that East Jerusalem is Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 to which resolution 242 (1967) applies. East Jerusalem should be under Palestinian sovereignty so that it may

become the capital of the independent State of Palestine. Arab and Muslim rights to the Islamic and Christian holy places in Jerusalem must be preserved. In no way can Israeli sovereignty over these holy places be accepted.

The status of Jerusalem and its spiritual and religious importance make it imperative that the city be an open city where freedom of worship and access to the holy places is guaranteed for all believers in God.

Jordan has suffered immensely during the past five decades as a result of the situation arising from the Palestine question, particularly the refugee problem. There are more than 1.5 million refugees living in Jordan. This amounts to 41 per cent of all refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This is in addition to the people displaced as a result of the June 1967 war. As a result of the refugee situation, Jordan has shouldered heavy financial, economic and social burdens.

Jordan will be subject to pressures that will threaten its stability and that of the region if the settlement does not satisfy its legitimate vital interests. Refugees and displaced persons in Jordan will only accept a settlement that recognizes their fundamental rights to return and to compensation.

It is well known that the vast majority of these refugees have Jordanian citizenship as a result of the unity that was established between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank in 1950. The declaration of unity at the time provided for the preservation of all Arab rights in Palestine and for the inalienability of the rights of the refugees.

Upholding the right of return will, therefore, enable every refugee to exercise freely his or her personal choice. Jordan must safeguard and preserve the rights of its citizens, which is its responsibility under national and international laws. Any solution that does not satisfy the rights of Jordan and its citizens will not lead to the establishment of a just and lasting peace.

Since the question of the refugees and their continued suffering has caused grave damage to Jordan and placed heavy burdens on it, Jordan demands rectification of the damage and losses that it has incurred. This rectification needs to include suitable and adequate compensation. Jordan will endeavour, by all possible means, to ensure that its legitimate claims with regard to this issue are considered.

It is worth mentioning that the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty stipulates that the solution of the refugee problem must be based on international law and that it should be dealt with bilaterally and in parallel with the permanent status negotiations. It also established a mechanism to deal with all financial claims between the two parties.

The rights of refugees and displaced persons to return and to compensation, and the rights of Jordan under international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, take precedence over other considerations. Jordan, therefore, will only accept a settlement that will preserve its legitimate rights and ensure a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Otherwise, the conflict will remain open and volatile, perpetuating the seeds of instability in the region. The position of the refugees in Jordan is vital to the success of any settlement to be reached.

Also on the question of refugees, Jordan once again emphasizes the importance of supporting UNRWA to enable it to carry out its mandate, which must continue until a solution to this question is fully implemented. Jordan, as host to the largest number of refugees and the largest donor to UNWRA, expresses its appreciation of the Agency's role and calls upon the international community to provide it with the needed financial resources to carry out its humanitarian tasks, particularly at this sensitive phase of the peace process. It also expresses appreciation to the donor States for their contributions.

Peace in the Middle East cannot last unless it is comprehensive. This makes the establishment of peace on the Syrian track essential and a sine qua non for peace in the region as a whole. Negotiations on this track must, therefore, resume in order to reach an agreement ensuring the return to Syria of the occupied Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) is a positive development that will hopefully serve as a foundation for the implementation of other Security Council resolutions, leading to the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region, which has suffered for many decades from the depletion of its resources

and the energies of its peoples. Only peace will provide security for all. It should lead to ending the arms race and to using the resources for the development of the region and making it free from weapons of mass destruction.

Ten years have passed since the beginning of the Gulf crisis caused by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. As a result, the region as a whole continues to suffer. Iraq continues to pay a heavy price as a result of continued comprehensive sanctions imposed on it, which caused and continue to cause unprecedented mass suffering for the Iraqi people.

Jordan calls for launching a new thinking and a new look at the situation in Iraq in order to put an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people, especially since the collective sanctions, which are the severest of their kind in United Nations history, have not achieved their goal of consolidating peace and security. They have instead led to results that, in the long run, will give rise to dangers threatening the region as a whole. The need to implement and comply with Security Council resolutions does not conflict with the maintenance of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, nor with refraining from action that violates those resolutions. Iraq is an integral part of the region and its continued subjugation affects security and stability in the region as a whole. Jordan calls for the settlement of all matters related to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on the basis of full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including those dealing with Kuwaiti and other prisoners of war, and missing persons.

Jordan continues to suffer severe economic hardships as a result of compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions. Large segments of Jordan's economy have, as a result, sustained huge losses. It is, therefore, imperative to put an end to the negative effects of the sanctions on Jordan by showing better understanding of its situation, reviewing the policies and methods used in dealing with the sanctions regime and giving a more just interpretation to the relevant resolutions.

Because of our strong belief in the role of the United Nations, Jordanian armed forces participate effectively in its peacekeeping operations in several areas around the world. As a result, Jordan today is the second largest troop contributor to peacekeeping operations. While commending the report (A/55/305) of Mr. Brahimi's Panel on United Nations peace operations, Jordan wishes to reiterate the need for the provision of adequate means and resources to enable peacekeepers to achieve their noble objectives. We call for a constructive and thorough discussion of the report in order to produce the best possible means to attain that goal. In this spirit, we underscore the importance of conducting consultations with States that contribute to peacekeeping operations, before the adoption of major decisions concerning and affecting the status of their forces.

On another note, we feel that the startling developments witnessed by our world today, at various levels, make it increasingly necessary to rely on the United Nations to develop and establish norms in all matters pertaining to human security. The ongoing dialogue on the need to establish complementarity and balance between State sovereignty and human rights only reflects the importance of this issue. Sovereignty should not provide a cover for violating human rights. Hence, greater emphasis should be placed on the importance of objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality when dealing with human rights issues.

It is illogical to continue to keep silent about the suffering of whole nations whose dignity is being undermined and whose human rights are being violated, while prominence is almost always given to other partial issues for purely political considerations.

With the onset of the third millennium the world is entering a new epoch that necessitates the formation of a new pattern of relations in the international arena based on our collective responsibility to develop and safeguard what has been achieved so far. Our world needs to establish a new paradigm of international relations based not on confrontation and exclusion, but on new foundations of openness and real partnership.

Integration, which encompasses the overlapping and interdependence of interests, presupposes partnership and solidarity among nations to help them manage change and ease the lack of confidence and hesitation associated with the fear of failure. The international community's willingness to encourage and support the will to change will certainly reinforce the capacity to deal with such change with minimum losses and convince those taking such a risk that today's world is not based on a zero-sum option and that the challenge that we all face is: How can man, regardless of ethnic background, economic situation or religious belief be the primary beneficiary of the

development achieved by humanity in modern times? This is the acid test we all face today. Will we succeed?

The President *(spoke in French)*: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. George Papandreou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece): I express my sincere congratulations to the President on his election. I am certain his qualities and skills will bring a successful conclusion to the fifty-fifth session. May I also extend congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, his predecessor, on what he achieved. Finally, I endorse the European Union's priorities paper, which was developed by Hubert Vedrine, the President of the Council of the European Union.

Some believe that violence might be an intrinsic part of humanity. But so are humanity's relentless efforts to rule out violence, regulate antagonism, peacefully resolve confrontational situations and prevent hatred and prejudice. Whether we come together to understand each other or to debate each other, our goal has always been to better our lives and build a more secure future.

Since ancient times, we have attempted to establish norms of peaceful coexistence. In this effort, we have built traditions and religions, as well as political structures. Through these norms we have tried to battle a fate seemingly dictated by force, poverty, oppression, prejudice, chronic and communicable diseases, inequality and a withering environment.

Throughout history, our efforts have taken various forms. But they have all commenced with a unique first step: the overriding principle that, in order to solve our problems, we need to work together.

This month is being marked by two events that will bring the peoples of our world much closer: the Millennium Assembly and the Olympic Games. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, nations will meet, compete, clash, differ and disagree. Yet our world has never looked more united or more determined to tackle its problems as one, indivisible community.

In the current environment, our efforts to build a better world for our children can and ought to be pan-cosmic. We can all contribute to a future that inspires our children and inspires the will to grow and to create. As the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has very wisely said,

> "We face global challenges which oblige us to work together. If that is true in the economic and social sphere, it applies even more to the challenge of massacre and war".

These words command even more authority coming from a man whose political skill, moral authority and devotion have contributed, in numerous cases, to the resolution of conflicting issues.

When a child misses its childhood and its education because it is in a dark prison cell, when a child is maimed from the explosion of a mine or when a child dies of hunger, of AIDS or in war, we do not witness just a tragic event. We do not witness only the sad state of some distant community. In today's world, when we see a child die, we lose another ray of hope that our global community will come together as one, that we shall live in peace and that we will finally tackle the challenges we all face together.

In Greece, we have become deeply conscious of this reality. What goes on in our neighbourhood directly affects the way in which our children will grow and develop. So we have made a commitment to our world and, more specifically, to our region, and it is this commitment that I have come to share with the Assembly today.

The two global events of this September — this Assembly and the Olympic Games — symbolize the beginning of an era for my country. After this ministerial week of the General Assembly, Greece will raise the Olympic flag in Sydney. For the second time in almost a century, the international community will bestow upon Athens the responsibility of the Olympiad.

Over the next four years, Athens has committed itself to run both an athletic and a cultural Olympiad. Today, I commit our county to an Olympiad for peace: four years of the most relentless efforts and a commitment to the international community to fight against the evils that have kept our community of nations at war, under totalitarianism and under oppression.

I pledge today that when the Olympic flame of our ancestors rises over the Athenian sky, it will light up more than a shiny stadium. It will light up a whole area of fighting for peace, democracy and justice. The next four years — the years that coincide with this Greek Olympiad — will set of the stage upon which

the future event will unfold. The globalization of the economy, the increased power of the media and rapid developments in information technology, communications and biotechnology are just some of these new challenges.

Globalization, while creating incredible wealth for many, fosters conditions for conflict and poverty. The new economy cannot be dominated by interests, and must be monitored to promote both democracy and human security. For the next four years, Greece will take an active role in international forums to do its part in dealing with this problem of globalization. That is why Greece has also enthusiastically accepted an invitation to join the Human Security Network.

Human rights laws alone cannot provide for human rights; they must be strengthened by civic responsibility and democratic institutions. We need to create structures that will reach beyond the democratic deficits of the global community. We need to create regional cooperation, build civic structures and community services and work with non-governmental organizations. We need to educate our citizens and our societies in making this process their own and allow their voice to be heard.

This, in our view, is the role of the United Nations. This honourable Organization can and must bridge the gap between the global challenges we face and the democratic deficits that exist in our global culture. We believe that now is the time to turn the United Nations from an Organization working to globalize democracy into an Organization that is also able to democratize the process of globalization. The Millennium Summit agenda is proof that the international community shares these views.

Initiatives taken within the United Nations can make our world a better place. Let me use a single but powerful example. On 7 September, nations were invited to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts.

Whatever the causes of modern-day brutality towards children, the time has come to call for a halt — to call for a truce. The most fundamental principle is that children should have no part in war. This is only one of the initiatives that Greece will actively support in the international arena in the coming years.

At the same time, our view of the purpose of international organizations comes from the rich experience we have amassed in our region. Starting with the war in Kosovo, my country has been deeply involved in the events unfolding in the area. We believe that the lessons of this involvement can greatly contribute to the work of these organizations. We are eager to share our experience with the international community.

We believe that stability in our region is a prerequisite for Greek security, and we define stability to mean the practice of democracy, the strengthening of institutions that provide transparency and accountability, the reduction of economic inequalities and the rule of law in our societies and between our countries. Our security lies in being a member of the European Union and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and we work so that countries in the region may benefit from the stabilizing influence of their future membership in these institutions.

During the Kosovo war, my colleagues in neighbouring countries and I decided to cooperate closely to alleviate human suffering and avoid further instability in our region. We grew to understand that our fates were intrinsically linked. As a result, we were compelled to discover ways to increase our cooperation and effectiveness in dealing with our problems. We would otherwise have been condemned to constant strife, conflict and isolation in the world. In the next four years, Greece will build upon this base. We are determined to transform the plight of a war and its brutal memories into an opportunity for generations to come.

Through this process, I hope that Greece has managed to inspire in the international community the importance of a consistent, universal and unifying policy towards South-Eastern Europe. From Bosnia to Cyprus, we have the same objectives: we want the countries in the region to be integral, peaceful and democratic; we want them to remain multicultural; and we want them to join the European Union. Yugoslavia, too, is an essential part of this political framework. We strongly desire to see the return of Yugoslavia to Europe. I would like to endorse my Romanian colleague's call to rethink our policy on sanctions, which often do more to serve purposes contrary to those for which we are striving.

That is our message. Even though it is simple sounding, our message is a radical break from the past, when favouritism, cold-war intricacies and double standards consistently broke the spirit of the people in the region. Now is the time to put an end to that. We must stop redrawing borders around ethnically homogeneous communities while compelling them to seek the favours of greater Powers. In the next four years, we will commit Greece to an effort to transform the multitude of races, religions and ethnicities in the region into an instrument of solidarity and stability — a beautiful kaleidoscope of creative, multicultural cooperation.

Greece's vision for the Balkans is one of a region in which democracy finally becomes the norm; where citizens' aspirations can finally be realized through peaceful and democratic practices; where the rights of minorities are respected; and where Governments are accountable, economies are transparent and politics allow for the fullest participation of all elements of society.

The world has a responsibility in supporting this vision for our region. We need to empower the region, which has historically been handicapped, dependent and divided by a world community of competing interests and a babble of conflicting signals. This balkanization of the region must be replaced by coordination of international efforts.

This is why we have actively supported and promoted this new vision within the international community. Last year our efforts helped more than 40 countries develop a unique contract between the international community and south-eastern Europe. The contract was coined the Stability Pact. We have a clear sense of how the Stability Pact can achieve its goals and it is an optimistic sign that the European Union, the United States and Russia cooperate closely within its framework. Regional integration can also be achieved as the Stability Pact promotes investment in infrastructure projects. Education is a primary goal and a strategy for democratic leadership and institution-building, which will stimulate economic growth and will bring us together. The pact actively promotes respect for the rule law among States and peoples in the region.

Our stand in international organizations and our agenda for the next four years is coloured also by our recent experience with Turkey. The earthquakes that shook Greece and Turkey a year ago created a new climate for the first time in our recent history. Tragedy generated a genuine feeling of human warmth. Spontaneous and dramatic acts of fraternity and solidarity were expressed. Our mandate was clear. Our peoples desire to live in peace together.

Since the earthquakes, Greeks and Turks are using every opportunity to explore their newly found neighbours, and to come together, meet, exchange experiences and make up for lost time. On a bilateral level we have signed 10 agreements that will radically change the environment in which we interact; in one year, 10 agreements. We do not view these developments as a momentary result of what was lately coined as seismic diplomacy. We view them as the beginning of a long process that will radically affect our lives in the coming years.

We have opened a dialogue; one that is honest. And although we may differ and do differ on many issues, such as how we see Cyprus or how we approach our bilateral relations, this open approach can only lead to a progressive resolution of our problems. When I speak today I know that those of the Turkish side will not or may not agree on many issues. But they know we are honest. We are honest in what we say and in our desire for a new and peaceful relation.

I believe that Greece and Turkey have no choice but to explore new avenues for cooperation. I believe our mutual interests can outweigh our political differences. We can and must resolve these differences through peaceful means; peaceful means of that of the International Court of Justice.

The European Union's decision to upgrade Turkey's status to that of a candidate country in Helsinki in December marked an historic turning point in Greek-Turkish relations. Helsinki does not signal the end of Greece's efforts; it represents the beginning of a new and equally courageous Greek initiative. In this context, we are ready also to further discuss confidence-building measures between Greece and Turkey.

I do not want to give the false impression that all our problems have suddenly been resolved. It is also most distressing that a variety of statements and acts still undermine this genuine and difficult effort, and there are those who certainly may wish that our efforts will fail. It is our historical duty to overcome these

difficulties and maintain the momentum in response to our peoples' mandate for peace.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and all those who labour with him towards a just solution in Cyprus: a solution based on United Nations resolutions for a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation in one international personality, one citizenship and one sovereignty.

At this time, I would appeal to him to move forward with the peace talks on this basis. The implementation of United Nations resolutions is not only important for Cyprus. It is important for the moral standing of this all-important Organization. Double standards and inaction only serve to undermine the credibility of this Organization in the eyes of so many countries and peoples.

One cannot accept developments such as those that recently took place in Strovilia. This responsibility rests with the United Nations, with the guarantor powers and all those who have a say in international developments. It has become obvious that the current situation in Cyprus and its occupation by foreign forces challenges the integrity and credibility of this honourable Organization. I know this term may be painful, but Cyprus is an occupied island, and this must end. We need to go beyond the situation and it will take courage; courage from all involved.

A solution to the Cyprus problem can and should be seen as a win-win situation. It is vital for peace, stability and security in our region. I truly believe that the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot communities can find solutions, and we must allow them to live together peacefully. We can aid them in this process. Greece and Turkey can aid them. Cyprus will either unite us or divide us, Greece and Turkey. We have a responsibility to cooperate on Cyprus and to facilitate the solution to this process. Greece and Turkey, through their rapprochement, share a rare opportunity to help the citizens of Cyprus rebuild their island, their homes and their dreams. The outcome of these efforts should be that every Cypriot enjoys safety, equality under the law, protection of their human rights, appropriate representation and security under a European roof.

Cyprus, Turkey and Greece: for anyone willing to envision the future, our futures are as interwoven as our histories. A reunified federal Cyprus, member of the European Union, will not only serve the European aspiration for stability in the region, but the aspirations of every citizen in every one of the countries involved.

I extend my appeal to the Turkish Cypriots. We want them near us, in our wider European family. In this family we do not only guarantee them the solidarity of the Greek people, but also the commitment of the Greek Government. Our citizens will only master the great possibilities that lie ahead if this last wall in Cyprus comes tumbling down.

Our experience in our region, our rapprochement with Turkey and our consistent efforts for a just solution in Cyprus have given Greece a new voice in the international community. We treasure our new capacity and intend to grow it further. During our Olympiad for Peace we plan to keep a close eye on developments in the Middle East, always seeking methods to facilitate the hopeful process. We shall follow closely developments in the South and particularly in Africa, a continent for which the Greek people share a special place in their hearts. Our emphasis will be on children: their rights, their right to avoid a violent life.

Our concentration in our Olympiad for Peace will be on international initiatives in which our country can play a role. Drawing on our ancient traditions, we are working to re-establish the practice of Olympic Truce. We aspire to the day when the tradition of suspending all hostilities during the Olympic Games becomes the seed for a more lasting peace. Huge amounts of resources are wasted on military procurements and war, and they must be channelled into health, education, culture and sport. To this end and in close cooperation with the International Olympic Committee and President Samaranch, we have established the International Centre for Olympic Truce in Greece.

In both ancient and modern Greek, the word for truce is *ekecheiria*. It has a dual meaning. It means setting one's weapons aside, but it also means reaching out one's hand in friendship. We do not simply aspire to a momentary truce, but to a continuous truce, an active truce.

The concept of Olympic Truce can complement the work of national and international organizations specializing in conflict prevention and resolution and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations sharing similar objectives. The Centre in Olympia will offer a sanctuary to support peace-building. This year we hosted children from war-torn areas in the Balkans.

Truce in Bosnia in 1992 allowed for children to be inoculated. Truce in Sidney this year will allow for North and South Korean teams to march under the same flags: an historic moment.

I started my address by saying that people coming together has always been the prerequisite for building a better world and a more secure future. I conclude by appeal to members. Take this ancient tradition, which by now is no longer exclusively Greek. It has become universal. Use this tool to complement efforts and inspire the younger generation for peace and cooperation, going beyond ethnic, racial, religious or other divisions.

This is the objective of the Olympic Truce. And this is the foundation upon which Greece shall build its four-year Olympiad for Peace.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I will now call on His Excellency Mr. Josep Piqué, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. Piqué (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish sincerely to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the work of the Millennium Assembly. I would also like to express my appreciation for the work of his predecessor, Foreign Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab, which culminated in the recent Millennium Summit.

I also welcome Tuvalu as a new Member State of the United Nations. I am sure that it will make a useful and enriching contribution to the work of the Organization.

What kind of United Nations do we want? Why, and to what purpose, do we need the United Nations in this new millennium? The Millennium Summit was convened to answer those questions. The task of the General Assembly is to devise and implement the guidelines that the Summit proposed. Spain would like to suggest some ideas for progress in three of the Organization's basic spheres of action: managing globalization, combating poverty and peace-making.

The United Nations that we want must be our main instrument for meeting the many challenges of globalization. Its universal nature places our Organization in an ideal position for that purpose. It would be unforgivable if it were not capable of rising to that task, which has to be undertaken in very different fields. One such area is human rights. The process of the universalization of human rights constitutes one of the United Nations most valuable contributions to international relations since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948. If the twentieth century has been one of formulating and structuring human rights on the international level, the next century must be that of ensuring that their effective implementation is universal.

The practices in most urgent need of elimination are racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. The 2001 World Conference against Racism must be an effective instrument to that end. We must also strive to abolish the death penalty, which we consider a punishment contrary to the dignity of the human being. The adoption of moratoriums against carrying it out could be a first step towards its total ban.

Our Organization must also enable us to provide solutions, in a spirit of solidarity, to humanitarian problems that until recently have simply not been addressed. The consequences have been borne by defenceless civilian populations. I refer to the situation of refugees and persons displaced within their own countries, civilian victims of armed conflicts and international aid workers who are subject to threats or coercion. It is essential to broaden the scope of our action in this area and to pay special attention to the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Last week, in this very city, the President of the Spanish Government signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, relative to children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In that same vein, the General Assembly this year adopted a resolution (54/262) agreeing to the holding in Spain in 2002 of the Second World Assembly on Ageing. We shall do everything possible to ensure the success of such an important event.

In this overall context, we must mention the issue of so-called humanitarian intervention, aptly proposed on more than one occasion by the Secretary-General. The United Nations that we want cannot be an Organization that remains paralysed in the face of massive violations of human rights, wherever they may take place. When that has occurred, its prestige has been seriously affected, and it has been left out of basic decision-making in times of crisis. The disgust provoked by a passive stance in the face of those atrocities and the need to strengthen the role of the

Organization in crisis situations are merely two sides of the same coin. It is essential that we be capable of building consensus on at least two fundamental issues.

The first is actions regarding which the international community cannot remain idle, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, which are offences referred to in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Consensus should also be reached among the permanent members of the Security Council over the cases in which they should refrain from exercising their veto to block Council resolutions aimed at putting an end to massive violations of human rights. The principle of State sovereignty continues to be essential in contemporary international society, but it must not be used as a protective shield to trample upon human rights with impunity.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court signals the direction in which the international community is moving in that area. The creation of an international system of criminal justice constitutes the most important change in international law since the adoption of the San Francisco Charter. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that my country's process of ratification of the Rome Statute concluded yesterday. I hope that the International Criminal Court will become a reality in the not-too-distant future. I trust therefore that the Rome Statute will be signed and ratified by the largest possible number of States, without directly or indirectly affecting its integrity and effectiveness.

If there is one issue that makes us realize that there are global interests demanding our collective management it is that of environmental protection. It is imperative that the Kyoto Protocol for combating the greenhouse effect should come into force in 2002, at the latest. Spain is a signatory of the Protocol, as well as of the agreements on the ozone layer, bio-diversity, bio-security and desertification — the latter problem being one which especially affects my country.

Unfortunately, globalization has also generated fresh opportunities for the development of universal plagues such as terrorism and transnational organized crime. However, globalization also provides us with new instruments to combat them, provided we agree on how to use them. Spain supports the drafting of a general convention against international terrorism, and is grateful to India for its initiative in that respect. The work aimed at the adoption of a convention against transnational organized crime must also be concluded.

One of the United Nations top priorities is the fight against poverty. The Millennium Summit gave special attention to measures aimed at eradicating poverty. The specific implementation of those measures must be a basic aspect of the work of the General Assembly. The United Nations that we want must make it possible for developed and developing countries to conclude agreements regarding the role they must play in that task.

The high-level meetings that will be held in 2001 on financing for development and on the least developed countries must not be wasted. Spain will certainly do everything within its power to contribute to their success. My country follows the guidelines produced by the World Summit for Social Development suggesting that at least 20 per cent of cooperation resources be devoted to basic social sectors such as health, education, housing and employment, which have the greatest impact on the most disadvantaged sectors of the population and, as a result, on the eradication of poverty. Spain has prepared an ambitious microcredit programme aimed at meeting the needs of the least favoured sectors of the population of developing countries.

Likewise, Spain has begun debt relief programmes in several countries, including Mozambique and the Central American countries most affected by hurricane Mitch. We resolutely support the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. Medium-income countries with serious external debt problems should not be excluded from debt relief plans, as long as they implement meaningful domestic programmes to eradicate poverty.

In the health sector there have been severe setbacks in recent years in the fight against infectious diseases, especially in Africa. Spain actively backs the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the efforts under way to facilitate access to drugs against AIDS for patients in developing countries. It also supports the holding of a special session of the General Assembly on that illness. Moreover, Spain has a special interest in examining possible action against other infectious and parasitic diseases, particularly in Africa.

The first sentence of the Charter states the resolve of the United Nations to save succeeding generations

from the scourge of war. We must not resign ourselves to the indefinite prolongation of some regional conflicts. In Africa a solution has not yet been found for the situation in the Congo, which for years has ravaged one of the richest and most influential countries of the continent. Angola and Sierra Leone continue to be the backdrop for civilian conflicts that are often financed by the illegal sale of diamonds and other precious resources.

Political and practical support for the United Nations and the mission deployed on the ground has been a constant feature of Spain's policy concerning the dispute over Western Sahara. Therefore, my country will maintain its commitment to a definitive settlement of that dispute during this decisive time and will support the efforts that the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy are making in compliance with Security Council resolution 1309 (2000).

New prospects for peace have opened up in the Middle East following the Camp David summit. It is vital to consolidate the important progress made there and take advantage of this historic opportunity to conclude an agreement on all outstanding issues. Spain considers that, pursuant to the Declaration of Berlin, the Palestinian people are entitled to establish their own state. The evolution of the peace process must be reflected in the resolutions to be adopted this year by the General Assembly, which must not be a mechanical repetition of the wording used in previous years.

The situation in Iraq is nevertheless proving to be frustrating. The interruption of weapons inspections, the absence of any foreseeable date for the lifting of the sanctions, the continuation of armed action and the difficult humanitarian situation in the country all combine to produce a situation that is far from encouraging. It is imperative that consensus within the Security Council on this matter be strengthened and that Iraq collaborate with the United Nations with a view to the full implementation of resolution 1284 (1999) and other relevant resolutions.

Turning to Latin America, it is vital that the international community send a clear message of support for the peace process in Colombia. The efforts by President Pastrana to reach an agreement that will put an end to decades of violence and lack of security deserve the support of us all.

The difficulties faced by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in the accomplishment of its tasks should not overshadow its achievements to date in what is probably the peacekeeping operation with the widest-ranging objectives ever undertaken by the United Nations. Those objectives are to pacify the territory, to reconcile its population, to rebuild its economy, and to enable Kosovo, as stated in resolution 1244 (1999), to enjoy substantial autonomy and an administration that is truly its own, while respecting the principle of territorial sovereignty and integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Many of these conflicts could perhaps have been avoided. Spain unreservedly supports the Secretary-General's efforts to direct the Organization's conflict-prevention. His report on Africa provides an innovative approach, proposing a wide-ranging package of measures to address the conflicts on the African continent.

An important element in this arsenal of preventive diplomatic measures is a sound sanctions policy. Sanctions regimes must be carefully graduated in order to fulfil their goal: to penalize a particular government whose policies constitute a threat to peace, without harming the civilian population of that country, which in many cases is totally powerless to influence the decisions of its Government, or third parties. Sanctions must be applied in a flexible way and be subject to periodic review, enabling them to be adapted to changing circumstances.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are another two essential elements of conflict prevention. It is vital to overcome the setbacks suffered in recent months by the nuclear non-proliferation process and to promote the signing and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test- Ban Treaty, with a view to its early entry in force. It is likewise a matter of concern that it has not yet been possible to start negotiations on a protocol on fissile material; it is urgent to achieve the necessary consensus to that end.

The conclusion of the negotiations on the Verification Protocol to the Convention on Biological Weapons represents an achievement in this field that is as important as the entry into force of the Convention on Chemical Weapons. In the same way, the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects must constitute a milestone comparable to the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines.

Another of the United Nations goals must be to conclude the decolonization process worldwide by doing away with the last vestiges of colonialism. One of them persists, as a painful anachronism, in Spanish territory. I am, of course, referring to Gibraltar, where, nearly three centuries after its population was expelled and the Rock occupied by British troops, a colonial situation still lingers. This is an infringement of my country's territorial integrity and contravenes the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2353 (XXII). Regaining sovereignty over this part of our territory is a longstanding goal for Spain, which is fully in favour of a meaningful dialogue. It is regrettable that the United Kingdom has not yet shown a genuine political will to resolve this problem. Because of this, 15 years after the start of bilateral talks in the framework of the Brussels process and despite the decisions of the General Assembly, we have not registered any progress at all on this matter, in spite of several concrete proposals put forward by our side.

We want a United Nations that is capable of carrying out the tasks that have been entrusted to it. To achieve this, it must complete its process of reform. For instance, the role of the General Assembly — the only body in which all the Member States are represented — must be enhanced, as it is the United Nations driving force for debate and political impetus. Civil society should be incorporated to a greater extent into the Organization's work. This would contribute to bringing people closer to the United Nations and to securing a greater commitment from them with regard to its work.

It is also vital to reform the Security Council in order to enable it to fully perform its duties in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Spanish Government believes that this reform must draw its inspiration from the following principles.

First, it must be conducted on the basis of a broad and solid consensus, in order to avoid dangerous divisions among Member States and to provide the enlarged Council with the greater legitimacy it needs to carry out its work effectively.

In the context of democratization, it must allow for an increase in the number of non-permanent members from all regional groups, and especially from the developing world. Spain considers that an enlargement of this category of non-permanent members would best reflect the trend towards the democratization of international society at the dawn of the third millennium.

To enhance the Council's effectiveness, steps must be taken to prevent exercise of the veto power from blocking the Council in certain crisis situations.

Finally, there must be greater transparency. The Council's working methods must be improved by increasing the number and quality of the consultations among its members and with other Member States, so that the latter will not be left out of the decision-making process.

The Organization that we need must also be able to act firmly and effectively on the ground in order to maintain the peace. The first step in this direction is to reflect on past mistakes. Therein lies the importance of the Brahimi report on United Nations peace operations, which — in the same way as former reports on Rwanda and Srebrenica — hit a nerve when it acknowledged our faults and proposed solutions for overcoming them.

The Organization's shortcomings in this field have at times been very serious, and have cost human lives and brought great suffering to the peoples directly affected. They have also seriously discredited the United Nations in the eyes of our peoples.

Spain has a direct interest in ensuring that peacekeeping operations are well organized and managed, because at this time hundreds of Spaniards are participating in them in such faraway places as East Timor, Kosovo, Ethiopia and Guatemala. Moreover, last year Spain signed an agreement with the Secretariat on the Stand-by Forces — an agreement in which some of the recommendations contained in the Brahimi report already appear.

Spain steadfastly supports these recommendations and hopes that they will be rapidly implemented. At the same time, we must be aware that all of this will require a much greater political and financial commitment on the part of all with respect to peacekeeping operations. It will require faster deployment of the necessary military and civilian units and larger-scale measures in order to consolidate peace once conflicts come to an end. Above all, if United Nations troops are compelled to take greater risks in order to guarantee the implementation of Security Council mandates, such mandates must be clear, realistic and have the unequivocal backing of the Council. All this will require a serious effort to find

common positions and to achieve consensus within the Council in the elaboration of the resolutions containing such mandates, eliminating any ambiguities that could hamper their effective application. It means more resolute and unwavering action against specific States or groups which may attempt to disrupt such action, including the possible application of sanctions. Only then will we be able to send our troops to situations in which they will have to risk their lives in order to ensure that such mandates are upheld.

Improving peacekeeping operations will undoubtedly be costly. Neither this nor any of the other tasks facing the Organization will be possible if it does not resolve its financial crisis. Spain is the eighth-largest contributor to its regular budget and pays its contributions on time, in full and without conditions. Therefore we have a direct interest in seeing the Organization's financial crisis resolved once and for all, as soon as possible. The principle of capacity to pay must continue to be the basic criterion for deciding the assessed contributions. European Union countries already are contributing much more than they should to the United Nations budget in accordance with this principle. Spain's stance will be a constructive one in the negotiations to review the scale of assessments later this fall.

In an increasingly interdependent world, there is no alternative to multilateral cooperation. The United Nations must rise to the occasion in order to fulfil the expectations of the peoples who founded it. The countries represented here must face up to that responsibility by building an Organization capable of meeting the challenges posed by globalization in the new millennium. The United Nations that we want is possible. It is within our reach to achieve it.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call next on Her Excellency Mrs. Camara Hadja Mahawa Bangoura, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea.

Mrs. Bangoura (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I am very pleased on behalf of the people and the Government of Guinea to convey to Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland our warmest congratulations on his unanimous election to preside over our deliberations at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. His election highlighted his merits, his personal qualities and his rich experience in international affairs. It also reflected the high esteem in which the international community holds his great country, Finland, whose commitment to the ideals of peace, justice, progress and the advancement of women is well known and appreciated by one and all. As a member of the General Committee at this session, my delegation wishes to assure the President of its support and full cooperation.

It gives me pleasure also to pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, who honourably carried out his weighty responsibilities in the service of the Organization.

Let me also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose exemplary work at the helm of the Organization merits our highest appreciation and our support. I take this opportunity moreover to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/54/2000) entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". That remarkable document takes account of all the current concerns of Member States.

I welcome the admission of the State of Tuvalu as the one hundred eighty-ninth Member of the Organization. This reinforces the universality of the United Nations.

This session of the General Assembly is a historic one. It is taking place just as the Organization has successfully concluded the Millennium Summit, which brought together in this Hall nearly all the world's leaders. The outcome of that important Summit is a source of hope for our peoples at the dawn of the new millennium.

Just one week ago, from this very rostrum, the Prime Minister of Guinea informed the international community of a barbarous act of aggression against the Republic of Guinea, an act of aggression whose sole aim was to destabilize my country. Deadly, devastating attacks have been carried out against the peaceful population of Guinea. These were led by armed gangs from Liberia, but it is regrettable to have to note that another fraternal African country, Burkina Faso, has also been involved in the aggression. The Republic of Guinea, a land of peace and hospitality, which has paid an enormous price by receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees and which is working for the restoration of peace and harmony in West Africa, has thus been the victim of aggression by the same people who caused the genocide and mutilations in Liberia and in Sierra Leone.

I urgently call on the international community strongly to condemn this aggression, which is part of a plan to destabilize the subregion. It is this that justifies my Government's request to the Security Council that vigorous measures be taken to guarantee peace, security and stability in the West African region.

The Government of Guinea has had to face the severe consequences of the massive presence of 800,000 on its territory for the past decade, and it has been obliged to divert resources from our country's economic development programmes. That is why my Government is most grateful for the United Nations initiative to convene a conference for support and solidarity with respect to Guinea. On behalf of my Government, I wish once again to convey my delegation's sincere thanks to the Secretary-General and to all others who have contributed to this important initiative. My country looks forward with great interest to the completion of this initiative with the convening of a second meeting, scheduled to be held in November at Geneva.

This is the proper moment for my delegation to turn to the thorny question of conflict in Africa. Indeed, many of the crises that have emerged on our continent pose a threat to peace and constitute a grave violation of the principles and purposes of the United Nations. The scope of these crises and their proliferation jeopardizes all efforts at national development and at achieving subregional integration. I take this opportunity to welcome the report (A/55/305) of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, chaired by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. Its recommendations enabled the Security Council to adopt an important resolution on ensuring an effective role for the Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in Africa. My delegation hopes that the new provisions of that resolution will be used to guarantee the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Among the central priorities of Africa, which remains the theatre of many conflicts, is the strengthening of its capacity to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. Thus, whether it be the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea or the situation in the Great Lakes region, in Angola or in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there have been significant breakthroughs in the pursuit of peaceful, just and lasting solutions, thanks to concerted action by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations.

In the West African region, the quest for peace in Sierra Leone is continuing with the commendable assistance of States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and with the active support of the United Nations, through the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). My delegation expresses its full support for Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), which placed an embargo on the illegal sale of diamonds from conflict zones. We appeal urgently to all States and to all specialized agencies to cooperate actively in the effective implementation of that resolution.

The proliferation and uncontrolled distribution of light weapons is another subject of grave concern, and is a major factor complicating and prolonging conflicts in Africa and, more tragically, encouraging the recruitment of child soldiers. Indeed, the resurgence of rebel movements and the expansion of large-scale banditry in our countries have been made possible by that phenomenon. The firm support of the international community is required to eradicate it. In that connection, my delegation is pleased at the initiatives taken by the United Nations and by the OAU to support the efforts of our States to combat this scourge, which threatens the stability of our continent.

The beginning of the third millennium brings many challenges and hopes. It brings the hope of seeing a plan for the settlement to the conflict in Western Sahara, thanks to the joint efforts of the OAU and the United Nations, and the hope of finally seeing Israel and its Arab neighbours give peace a chance through a just and lasting settlement to the crisis, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, as well as the respect for the rights and dignity of all peoples in the region.

The question of development remains one of the major challenges of this century, and as such it must remain at the centre of our Organization's concerns.

At a time when a portion of the planet has contentedly crossed the threshold of this new millennium and is embarking, under the rubric of globalization, on what is called "the new economy", a major portion of the world — indeed, the largest portion — continues to live in poverty, suffering the perverse effects of this globalization.

With regard to the alarming situation prevailing on the African continent, the main concern of the

peoples of the United Nations must be Africa, so that the root causes of its non-development can be eradicated and so that it can be enabled to eliminate poverty and enhance its capacities in order for it to have better access to markets. To do that, debt cancellation, an increase in official development assistance and better attention to its specific needs should make it possible to integrate the African continent into the world economy. That is why my delegation, based on the correlation between peace and development, is pleased at the recent decisions taken by the G-8 in Okinawa, aimed at more effectively combating poverty and at bridging the digital gap between the North and the South and at humanizing globalization.

In that respect, my country calls for more solidarity on the part of the rich countries, and we deeply hope that — over and above professions of good faith — concrete measures will be taken to allow the developing countries, particularly those in Africa, to experience sustained growth leading to sustainable development.

With that in mind, my delegation appeals to all its development partners to contribute, by means of more generous and better-targeted aid, to strengthening the institutional capacities of our States and to creating adequate infrastructures, which guarantee balanced development and success in the struggle against poverty.

The Republic of Guinea is very much concerned by the ravages of the AIDS virus. We believe that this battle must further mobilize the international community so that the necessary sacrifices can be made to halt this scourge, which has taken more victims in Africa than anywhere else in the world. That is why my delegation supports the important decisions that resulted from the recent International Conference held in Durban, South Africa.

The protection of fundamental human rights, the satisfaction of priority human needs and social justice must remain at the forefront of United Nations concerns. The United Nations, in its irreplaceable role as an instrument for the promotion of cooperation and understanding between peoples, must strengthen the culture of peace and sharing.

Today it is unanimously acknowledged that the United Nations can continue to play an effective role only if there is a necessary reform of its organs, in particular the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The aspirations of strengthening its authority and ensuring more equitable representation in the Council for the Organization's Members have been reiterated many times by the overwhelming majority of United Nations Members, and recently by virtually all of the heads of State or Government during the Millennium Summit. We must also restore to the General Assembly its central role as the main deliberative body and, finally, reform the other organs, with a view to a greater revitalization of the entire United Nations system. These are the aspirations of the peoples of the United Nations — to enable this Organization to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In his statement at the Millennium Summit, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea reiterated the total commitment of our country to the principles of the United Nations and to the Charter. In this Assembly, I would like to reaffirm this commitment, which has never been found wanting in the history of my country. Under the leadership of its President, General Lansana Conté, a man of peace and dialogue, Guinea has always struggled to uplift human dignity, to defend freedom, to restore peace and to cultivate harmony among peoples.

Guinea will continue, side by side with other Member States of our Organization, to work resolutely to free humankind from the spectre of war, violence, exclusion and intolerance, and for a world of peace, justice and solidarity for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements made in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): I can assure you, Mr. President, that I will speak for far less than 10 minutes.

I would like to respond briefly to the remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Spain this afternoon about Gibraltar. The long-standing position of the British Government on this matter is well known to the

Government of Spain. I will simply restate it briefly here.

British sovereignty over Gibraltar was clearly established in the Treaty of Utrecht. This legal fact is incontrovertible. Moreover, the British Government stands by the commitment to the people of Gibraltar, as contained in the preamble to the 1969 Constitution of Gibraltar, which states that Her Majesty's Government will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

The British Government believes that issues relating to Gibraltar can be resolved only by building trust, cooperation and dialogue, and through direct talks aimed at overcoming differences, such as those established under the 1984 Brussels declaration.

We attach continuing importance to our dialogue with Spain.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My delegation has just listened with a great deal of interest to the statement made by Mrs. Bangoura, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guinea.

With regard to the unfounded accusation that has just been made against my country, Burkina Faso, I deem it essential to recall here and now the comments made by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso yesterday, when he referred here to the unfortunate situation in Guinea. The Minister stated that

> "in the face of the recent surprising, to put it mildly, allegations by Guinea, we would like to reassure that beloved, fraternal country, as well as the international community, that Burkina Faso had no part, directly or indirectly, in those unfortunate events. We repeat our readiness to welcome or support any initiative that could shed light on this matter, which we find profoundly distressing". (*A/55/PV.13*)

That assurance was not able to ease the minds and hearts of some people. We became aware of this earlier when we heard the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea speaking.

Let me state here once again that these renewed accusations are unfounded. On behalf of my delegation, I reiterate our readiness to work towards finding the truth of this matter.

Mr. Fall (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation followed with great interest the statement made in right of reply by the representative of brotherly Burkina Faso. We are pleased by the spirit of fraternity demonstrated by the delegation of Burkina Faso.

My delegation would like once again to reiterate — as was done first from this rostrum by our Prime Minister and earlier today by our Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation — the willingness of Guinea to maintain and develop its relations with all African countries. In the history of Africa since 1958, we have never contributed to the destabilization of any country. On the contrary, we have always paid a price for the liberation and the consolidation of the independence of African countries.

Our words today are not mere assertions; they are based on concrete information in our possession concerning recent events in Guinea. Everyone will recall that this is not the first time this issue has been raised. These connections were stressed during the most difficult moments of the war in Liberia and again during the current conflict in Sierra Leone, which has claimed so many victims. Once again, as to the painful events in our country, we have sad proof that Burkina Faso was involved.

At any rate, my delegation wishes to reiterate to my brother from Burkina Faso that Guinea remains willing to maintain the most cordial and friendly relations with his country, so long as respect is maintained for the territorial integrity of our country.

The meeting rose at 7.15 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.16

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

16th plenary meeting
Friday, 15 September 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I first give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Sir John Kaputin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea.

Sir John Kaputin (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the people and Government of Papua New Guinea, I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to your prestigious post. Your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at the dawn of the new millennium shows the high esteem in which the international community holds both you personally and your country, Finland. We are confident that you will guide the historic fifty-fifth session to a successful conclusion.

The skill with which your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, cooperated to develop the theme of the recent Millennium Summit, and presided over the drafting of the outcome document and ensured the smooth management of the Summit earned our sincere appreciation for a job very well done. We also congratulate him on his very positive contribution to our collective deliberations during the previous year.

May I also take this opportunity, through you, Sir, to heartily congratulate the heads of State of both Finland and Namibia on their magnanimous stewardship and successful conclusion of the recent unprecedented large assembly of approximately 150 heads of State and Government in New York, which paved the way for the pursuit of our common vision and security into the twenty-first century.

Beyond the millennium celebrations, this is a time for reflection and looking ahead. The Millennium Summit took place on the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence. The same anniversary also marks the first quarter century of my country's membership of the United Nations. It is therefore an apt occasion both for reflecting on experience and for looking ahead.

My particular focus is on the changing character of, need for and potential for international cooperation. The conjunction of the millennium with Papua New Guinea's silver anniversary invites us to take a number of different time perspectives: the short, medium and long terms. For those of us who have been privileged to play an active part in public life during this period, it also provides the opportunity to compare the ambitions we had 25 years ago with the challenges we face now.

As the Secretary-General recently reminded us in the very title of the document (A/54/2000) he prepared to guide and stimulate the Millennium Summit, the United Nations was formed in the name and with the objective of furthering the common purposes of "We the peoples of the United Nations". In similar fashion, the Constitution that came into effect when my country became independent was made and adopted in the name of "We the people of Papua New Guinea".

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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As someone who had the honour of participating in making the Papua New Guinea Constitution, I am very mindful of the national goals and directive principles we set for ourselves at independence. While some have a distinctively national character — such as preserving, developing and building on Papua New Guinean ways — others resemble challenges that the United Nations faces today. They include such universal challenges as promoting integral human development, equity and participation, and sustainable use of natural resources and the environment. They also include the challenge of maintaining, strengthening and making mutually beneficial use of national sovereignty and self-reliance.

But look at us now. What have we achieved? What remains to be done? The most striking feature of contemporary Papua New Guinea is the way in which we have had to trim our objectives. Our situation is, obviously, not unique, but it certainly warrants the most careful consideration.

When the present Government, led by the Prime Minister, The Honourable Sir Mekere Morauta, came to office in the middle of last year, we set ourselves five very carefully defined objectives: to restore integrity to State institutions; to stabilize our national currency — the kina — and the national budget; to remove obstacles to investment and growth; and to continue the process of working for lasting peace in Bougainville by peaceful means.

The national goals and directive principles continue to guide our long-term ambitions and plans. But experience and the realities of governance in the age of globalization have required us to focus on much more specific, short- and medium-term objectives. We cannot blame others — or even such largely impersonal processes as economic and technological globalization — for every aspect of our current situation. Much of the responsibility lies with leaders and institutions at home. Both fortunately and unfortunately, it is part of the human condition at the start of the twenty-first century that we are not on our own. Despite important differences in origins, processes and outcomes, our situation is not unique. Many other developing countries face similar challenges in the short and medium terms.

International cooperation is an important key to collective self-help, both between countries with similar weaknesses and strengths, and between countries that are different and complementary — especially rich and poor.

As regards global cooperation, as a member of the global community Papua New Guinea is able to draw on support from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank, our development cooperation partners in Europe, and the Asia-Pacific countries that have formed themselves into the Friends of Papua New Guinea.

While my delegation has come to New York to discuss global issues and explore the potential for global cooperation, Papua New Guinea also participates in various forms of regional, interregional and bilateral cooperation. Papua New Guinea recognizes the value of, and is firmly committed to further strengthening, global cooperation through bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO).

My Government is disappointed that the next round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations has been delayed, and calls for them to be held at the earliest possible opportunity.

As one of the countries where increasing areas of land are already becoming unusable or actually disappearing as a result of rising sea-levels caused by climate change, we believe in the urgent need for full implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

On an issue where the very survival of certain members of the global community is clearly at stake — and where global security depends on coordinated global action — there must be no backsliding, no compromises, and no special cases allowed because of inability or unwillingness to honour global agreements for whatever reason.

Papua New Guinea is pleased to welcome our close island neighbours and very good friends from Tuvalu to membership of the United Nations.

What a terrible tragedy it would be if the international community were to fail them at the very time when they, together with other small island States — including countries which joined the United Nations last year — are assuming the responsibilities which go with becoming full participants in the Organization's affairs.

Certain security issues, such as climate change, require a global approach. So do efforts to limit the

proliferation that would bring about the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Global cooperation is the only means by which the international community can realistically hope to achieve the objective which the Secretary-General set for the Millennium Summit of ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for people, instead of leaving them behind in squalor, especially in developing countries.

However, as the Secretary-General also suggested in his report (A/54/1) to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, different regions have different problems. Even similar problems in different settings may require different approaches. Security policies that work in one region may not work in others. The road to success can require complementary national, regional and global efforts.

Thus, Papua New Guinea is addressing the unwelcome spread of small arms and light weapons by imposing a complete ban on the issuance of new gun licenses. We support efforts to deal with the spread of illegally obtained or held arms through the Pacific Islands Forum.

We look to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to provide a global framework and global support for the efforts that individual States and regional organizations are taking to deal with the problem within their respective jurisdictions.

When it comes to the management of ocean resources, Papua New Guinea sees regional and interregional cooperation as complementary to measures designed to ensure the sustainable harvesting of fish in national waters.

We therefore welcome the agreement recently concluded under the auspices of the Multilateral High-level Conference on fisheries with the purpose of ensuring sustainable fishing for tuna and highly migratory species throughout their ranges in the Western and Central Pacific.

Papua New Guinea would also like to see both broader and deeper cooperation between coastal States in other aspects of oceans and ocean-bed management, including deep-sea mining.

In terms of regional cooperation, such cooperation is indispensable to dealing successfully with many important global and national issues. But regional cooperation can itself have a variety of different dimensions and employ different means.

In the South Pacific, for example, two of our closest neighbours, Fiji and Solomon Islands, are experiencing internal difficulties that have given rise to serious concern on the part of their friends.

We do not condone the illegal overthrow of democratic and constitutional Governments or other threats to the security of the Governments and citizens of other States, but, regrettably, and despite repeated efforts by previous Papua New Guinea Governments and other States, the main intra-regional body engaged in promoting regional cooperation in the South Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum, does not have a mechanism for dealing promptly and effectively with challenges to the security of States in the region.

It has, therefore, been unable to arrange consultations, let alone facilitate a coordinated approach to the situations which have arisen following armed challenges to the Governments of Fiji and Solomon Islands. Some of our neighbours have responded by looking for support outside the region.

With the recent addition of six additional Pacific members to the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of States party to the Lome Convention, 14 Pacific island States now have access to a very practical mechanism for dealing with such situations.

The upshot is that, when Ministers and Ambassadors from Pacific ACP member States met in Cotonou, Benin, in June for the signing of the new framework agreement between the ACP and the European Union, we decided to set up a ministerial mission to report on the situations in Fiji and Solomon Islands.

In doing so, we were mindful of the need for, and grateful for the support of, the European Union.

The offer made by the French Minister for Economic Cooperation at the regional forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to ensure that the European Commission would defer making a final decision on sanctions until the Pacific ACP Ministerial Mission had reported was especially welcome because of the meaning and support it gave to our effort at regional cooperation.

The imposition of sanctions against a country can be a very blunt instrument indeed, causing innocent and powerless people to suffer at the same time as the powerful and influential, and sometimes disadvantaging them even more. Even so-called smart sanctions can have wide, unintended effects while leaving their objects largely unaffected.

When a small group of armed men try to take over a Government, imposing sanctions that affect innocent men, women and children can be not only ineffective but even counter-productive.

Sanctions might leave armed youths unaffected and in a position where they are even unable to appreciate, or are indifferent to, the wider consequences of their actions.

The underlying causes of inter-group tensions in Solomon Islands and the events which followed the attempted civilian armed coup in Fiji could be difficult to identify, and are beyond influence by sanctions.

It is, therefore, vital that serious difficulties such as those currently affecting Fiji and Solomon Islands be properly studied and carefully addressed.

Sometimes, the people best equipped to understand such situations and identify underlying causes are neighbours with similar cultures or other shared values.

In terms of the ACP Ministerial Mission, at the request of other Pacific ACP States, I have recently had the honour of leading the Pacific ACP Ministerial Mission to Fiji and Solomon Islands.

My colleagues included the Ministers for Foreign Affairs from Cook Islands, Mr. Robert Woonton, and Vanuatu, the Honourable Serge Vohor, as well as the Minister for Education from Samoa, the Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa.

With the active support of the Governments of both countries, we followed a crowded itinerary of meetings with the Prime Ministers, ministers and officials in Fiji and Solomon Islands, members of the previous Governments of both countries and business and trade union leaders, as well as a wide cross-section of other elements of civil society, including women's organizations. We were also able to interview victims in towns and rural areas, and to examine instances of destruction at first hand.

My colleagues and I are currently working on our report. We expect to present it to the European Commission, the ACP-EU Joint Assembly and other ACP, EU and joint bodies in October.

The commitment made by the French Minister for Economic Cooperation, whose country currently holds the presidency of the EU, means that the region — or, at least, our report — has been given the opportunity to influence events. The process on which we have embarked is, therefore, more meaningful than any existing alternative. We, the Pacific ACP members, offered to share our report with the Pacific Islands Forum, and the support our initiative has received from the region reflects our commitment to wider cooperation, not to mention our unwillingness to become involved in even the appearance of competition between rival regional bodies or groups.

The initiative has been welcomed and praised, both in the region and further afield. It sets an example which is worthy of close study both for the precedents it sets for cooperation among Pacific ACP States and as a possible model for similar efforts in other regions.

With regard to the Bougainville situation, Fiji and Solomon Islands are not the first States in our region to experience serious internal difficulties, though we pray not only that there will be real improvement very soon but that they will be the last States to experience such difficulties.

After more than eight years of armed conflict — from 1989 to 1997 — the part of Papua New Guinea known as Bougainville is now at peace. The progressive political settlement is moving ahead. The Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development on Bougainville commits the parties to peace-building on several levels, from weapons disposal and the re-establishment of civil authority, through reconciliation among former combatants to reconstruction of infrastructure, restoration of services, economic and social recovery and early resumption of the kinds of development which are part of the return of normalcy.

The national Government is committed to such a multidimensional approach. It is the way by which we hope to cooperate in building for a lasting peace by peaceful means. The priority which the Prime Minister gave the Bougainville peace process more than 12 months ago remains in place. Evidence of its continuing significance can be seen in the initiative he

has recently taken to meet key Bougainvillean demands within the framework of the Papua New Guinea Constitution.

The Government, which took the initiative in inviting our neighbours, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu, to set up the neutral, regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG), values the contribution its unarmed personnel make to promoting mutual confidence on the ground. The PMG's success can be judged from the peaceful way in which it is now beginning to disengage by substantially reducing its size. The process needs greater support from the Bougainvillean parties so as to avoid the vacuum which has followed the departure of similar peacekeeping operations elsewhere, by cooperating in the re-establishment of policing, courts and correctional institutional services, as well as by strengthening the institutions at community level that help to maintain public order, dispense justice and uphold the rule of law.

As the initiator of the request for the United Nations observer mission in Bougainville, and as its host, Papua New Guinea appreciates the support which the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations provide for the Bougainville peace process. We are determined to keep on working for lasting peace by peaceful means within a flexible framework which will allow Bougainville a high degree of autonomy consistent with the integrity, security and sovereignty of the nation.

With regard to social and economic issues, as a developing country with 25 years of independence, Papua New Guinea is experiencing very great difficulty in improving national performance as measured by human development indicators. In some areas, our record is actually becoming worse. The current Government's five main objectives are intended to focus attention and effort where they are most needed. Our determination to pursue them is already making a very real difference, especially as far as economic management and the delivery of Government services are concerned.

Structural adjustment, including quite fundamental public sector reform, is one of the key means of bringing about often long-overdue change. We need the continuing support of our economic partners to succeed, including access to markets; increased investment in priority areas, such as downstream processing, which provides increased opportunities for productive employment; and aid on concessional terms. The recently concluded partnership agreement between the ACP countries and the EU is an example worthy of much wider emulation.

As a developing country that achieved independence only a quarter of a century ago, Papua New Guinea is firmly committed to the proper preparation for orderly decolonization. Impressed with the progress being made to implement the Noumea Accord, we continue to believe very strongly that the rights of the indigenous Kanaks of New Caledonia must be respected. Conscious of the consequences of other forms of decolonization, we welcome the re-emergence of East Timor as an independent entity. We look forward to receiving a delegation later this year to discuss how we might develop technical and other forms of mutually beneficial South-South cooperation.

Meanwhile, even as we continue to deepen and broaden cooperation with other Pacific island countries, we respect the integrity of our other neighbours and continue to benefit from the exchanges which flow from our status as a special observer at Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) meetings. In the broader arena of Asia-Pacific cooperation, we value our membership of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum and continue to work towards honouring the reciprocal commitments APEC members have made to liberalize markets. APEC includes some of our closest bilateral partners and friends. Common membership, and the process of developing economic ties with other APEC economies, do not detract from other aspects of Papua New Guinea's foreign relations. They do not affect the commitments we have made to such good friends as the People's Republic of China. We will not allow them to do so.

In conclusion, I should like to say that, 25 years after independence, Papua New Guinea has one of the longest unbroken records of constitutional and democratic government among countries that have become independent in the last 50 or so years. We have experienced difficulties, and had some near misses. The stresses and strains which have affected our system of Government have tested our strengths. In doing so, they have increased our understanding of countries experiencing serious internal difficulties — although not our sympathy for those who deliberately violate democratic principles or established constitutional

practices — while reinforcing our commitment to good governance, both at home and abroad.

Apart from the obvious consequences that this commitment has for Papua New Guinea's response to countries experiencing serious internal difficulties, including our preference for a positive, forward-looking approach and not negative sanctions, it also underlies our support for United Nations reform.

The reform must extend from improving administrative performance to making the Security Council more representative of United Nations Members as a whole. It must, in fact, extend to the performance of United Nations Members themselves, especially when it comes to paying their dues in a timely way and in full.

The millennium marks an important turning point in the calendar, and, because of my country's silver anniversary, in Papua New Guinea's history too. The United Nations is also at a critical turning point, with the Secretary-General drawing members' attention back to the original basis and focus among the people the Organization should serve.

The recent review of United Nations peace and security activities has produced an excellent report which challenges us to turn another corner and ensure that the increased responsibilities which the Organization has assumed since the end of the cold war help to keep and build peace in very different conditions.

I conclude by paying tribute to the vision which participants in the Millennium Summit have expressed on our behalf. In doing so, let me add that the real challenge we face is, emphatically, not to make more speeches, but to turn their wise words into practical forms of cooperation which help us achieve common purposes without sacrificing the diversity which is the basis of our need and ability to engage in global self-help.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Syed Hamid (Malaysia): I join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I am confident that with your vast experience and diplomatic skills you will be able to guide the proceedings of this Assembly to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the effective manner in which he guided the work of the last session of the General Assembly.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his great dedication to the Organization and the many contributions he has made in the service of the international community.

There are great expectations on the part of the international community that in the new century the United Nations will be a more effective Organization. Indeed, its continued relevance, especially to the developing countries, which comprise the majority of the membership of the United Nations, will, to a large degree, depend on their perception that it is attuned to their concerns and responsive to their needs. The Organization must continue to serve the interests of all its Members, big or small, strong or weak. It must be more transparent and democratic in its decision-making processes and work methods.

In this context, the reform and restructuring of the Organization continues to be a matter of great importance. Much has been done through the process of reform effected by the Secretary-General, but reform is a continuous and ongoing process and should continue to be vigorously pursued to ensure the United Nations increased effectiveness and efficiency, especially in facing up to the challenges of the new century. As modernization of the Organization entails additional resources, the critical issue of financing the United Nations must also be seriously addressed and resolved as soon as possible.

More intensified efforts should be made to bring to conclusion the deliberations on one of the most important aspects of the reform process: the restructuring of the Security Council. Clearly, the necessary compromises must be made if the ongoing deliberations on the reform of the Council are to make any progress at all. We look forward to your leadership, Mr. President, in unblocking the current impasse so that this important organ of the United Nations can be fully revamped, modernized and made more effective. Malaysia continues to support expansion of the Council in both categories of its membership. Any expansion in the permanent category should include both the industrialized and the developing countries. If there is

no agreement on expansion of the permanent membership, the Council should be enlarged for the time being in the non-permanent category.

A central objective of reform of the Security Council should be to ensure its effectiveness in the maintenance of international peace and security. Equally important is the need to enhance the Council's unity of purpose among its members, especially the permanent members, so as to avoid the situation that necessitated the taking of international action outside the Council by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as in the case of Kosovo, when the Council was unable to act. Notwithstanding the special circumstances of Kosovo, future international interventions should be made only with the express approval of the Security Council, in the interest of preserving the role and authority of the Council as enshrined in the Charter, as well as of ensuring the legality and legitimacy of all such actions.

Another aspect of the work of the Security Council that should be thoroughly reviewed relates to the imposition of sanctions on Member States, which have often brought untold suffering on the general populace, particularly women and children. Sanction regimes of the future should be established only when absolutely necessary and should be specifically targeted, time-bound, subject to regular review and lifted when no longer necessary. The interests of all parties to the conflict should be addressed in order to achieve a just and lasting peace. We have seen too many conflicts that seem to be resolved on paper but continue to remain outstanding on the ground.

We should strive in the new century to make our world a safer place. We should strive to get rid of weapons of mass destruction — particularly nuclear weapons, but also chemical and biological weapons. We must intensify global efforts to reduce existing stocks of these horrendous weapons, culminating in their total elimination. The major Powers and others that possess and manufacture these weapons bear a special responsibility. We should all play our part in ensuring that there is no let-up in the global efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

We should also limit the production and deployment of ultra-sophisticated, high technology conventional weapons, many of which are being used in the wars of developing countries, resulting in the ironic situation of third world countries fighting their wars with first world weapons, thanks to the aggressive marketing efforts of arms vendors of the developed countries. The developing countries can ill afford the arms race that this will trigger, nor the huge defence expenditures to sustain the use of these weapons.

We must ensure that genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and other crimes against humanity that were perpetrated, for instance, in Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, are never allowed to be committed again anywhere else in the world. More strenuous efforts should be made to apprehend indicted war criminals so as to send a stern warning to others. They should not be allowed to get away with their heinous crimes with impunity.

Undoubtedly, the maintenance of international peace and security can be better served through more effective use of preventive diplomacy. This has been highlighted by the Secretary-General in his Millennium Report (A/54/2000) and should be seriously considered.

The Organization will have to develop a more effective early-warning capability and deal with emerging conflict situations through more effective use of the mechanism of preventive diplomacy. A more proactive approach in preventive diplomacy would require even closer coordination and collaboration between the Security Council and the Secretary-General, who would have to put his good offices role to even greater use.

However, that should not become an excuse to impose anything on Member States or to interfere in their internal affairs. There are growing tendencies for the developed countries, in the name of civil society, democracy and human rights, to set standards in accordance with their own moulds for the developing countries to follow. We even ignore the fact that many of the problems confronting the developing countries are the vestiges of the colonial past. We want to leave yesterday behind and move to today and the future, but the pace appropriate to the particular country concerned should be followed.

United Nations peacekeeping operations should be empowered with clear and well-defined mandates, adequate resources and strong international support, irrespective of where they take place. There should be no perception of selectivity in their launching. In this regard, it is especially important that peacekeeping operations in Africa — notably in Sierra Leone, the

Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia and Eritrea — be strongly supported by the international community. At the same time, for peace to be viable it is essential that peacekeeping missions incorporate the necessary elements of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, with the necessary support of the international community.

My delegation commends the frank and forthright report (A/55/305) of the Brahimi Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. The Panel's bold recommendations deserve the detailed and careful consideration of the membership of the Organization. Thereafter, we must demonstrate the urgency, seriousness and political will to follow up on those laudable recommendations, lest the Panel's report meet the fate of many United Nations reports in the past for lack of the necessary political will.

On another conflict situation, it is a matter of great concern to Malaysia that one of the longest-running conflicts of this century, the Arab-Israeli conflict, remains unresolved. Successive opportunities were not grasped due to the lack of seriousness on the part of the Israeli Government to pursue the path of peace. We are disappointed that the Israeli Government fails to live up to the expectations of the international community and lacks the boldness of vision, as well as the will and courage, to grasp the once-in-a-lifetime window of opportunity to seal a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and Syria in the interest of regional peace and security.

The aspirations of the Palestinian people for an independent and sovereign homeland can no longer be denied. We look forward to welcoming in the very near future an independent State of Palestine among the community of nations here at the United Nations, as well as in other international organizations. Equally, we look forward to the return of Syrian Golan without further delay. Israel must bury the suspicion and distrust of the past and look to the future in an environment that will create opportunities and challenges in a peaceful and stable Middle East.

Since the East Asian financial crisis there has been increasing recognition of the nature of the problem of, and the need for reform of, the existing global financial and economic systems, which Malaysia has strongly advocated. It is my hope that efforts in that direction will continue to be pursued by the Bretton Woods institutions, even if the worst for the affected Asian economies may now be over and those countries are now recovering. It is dismaying that some quarters are suggesting that, with the end of the crisis, there is now no urgency or even necessity for reform. Given the universality of its membership, the United Nations is well placed to make an important contribution to promoting the reform process, particularly in the context of its own increasing dialogue and interaction with those institutions. It would be the height of folly and irresponsibility to wait for another round of speculative currency attacks to jolt us into action.

East Asia's traumatic experience is also a strong reminder of the negative effects of globalization on developing countries. While globalization is inevitable and is becoming a permanent feature of the new international order and system, it is far from being a panacea. Indeed, the United Nations *Human Development Report* indicates that globalization has led to the marginalization of many developing countries, resulting in an increasing disparity in economic attainment between nations. This conclusion is not surprising, given the existing inequitable international economic order and the differing access to technology.

With all its potential benefits, globalization in its unfettered form is likely to do more harm than good to the small, vulnerable economies, at least in the short and medium terms, unless measures are put in place to protect them. It will bring about not free trade, but an unfair and inequitable exchange: the inflow of capital, goods and services from the developed North in return for the outflow of hard-earned foreign exchange from the poor countries of the South. The notion of a level playing field, which is the central creed of globalization, would perpetuate the present inequities in favour of the strong, developed economies at the expense of the vulnerable economies of the developing world. It would only ensure the continued domination of the weak by the strong.

For globalization to be universally embraced without reservation there must be in place certain ground rules to regulate the conduct of free trade in goods and services to ensure an equitable exchange between unequal partners predicated on a win-win proposition. At the same time, the principle of transparency should be applied across the board to include currency traders and market manipulators, who are now somehow exempted from such a requirement,

as well as from payment of taxes. Until and unless these measures are instituted, globalization will be seen by the developing world as a largely predatory ideology of the rich nations for the exploitation and subjugation of poor ones.

That impression is further reinforced by the intolerance of dissenting of some of its promoters views in their zeal to prescribe the one-size-fits-all approach towards globalization. The developing countries should be allowed to pursue globalization at their own pace so as to enable them to develop social and institutional structures to fully benefit from the process while minimizing its negative impact. For many countries, the price to be paid for globalization as presently interpreted, particularly the loss of independence, would be simply too great for them to bear. This is not the time for us to re-examine the concept of the nation State and the sovereignty of nations in order to accommodate the needs of the giant multinational companies that operate across borders.

In the meantime, in order to brace themselves for the full impact of globalization, developing countries must forge enhanced cooperation among themselves in a true spirit of South-South cooperation and on the basis of mutually beneficial "smart partnerships" with the involvement of the private sector. This would facilitate a useful exchange of ideas and experience among them on the globalization process. Malaysia is pleased to share those ideas and experiences with its partners from the developing countries, and has done so in the past several years in the context of the Langkawi international dialogue. We are pleased to see that those dialogues have been emulated by Africa through the South African international dialogue. Indeed, in an increasingly complex future world it is only appropriate for the developing countries to develop such synergies through strategic linkages among themselves as well as with the developed countries.

To assist in the process of globalization, it is incumbent upon the international community to ensure that the developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, continue to receive development assistance to enable them to make the leap out of chronic poverty. Indeed, given the intrinsic link between peace, security and development, the Organization must continue to be in the vanguard of global developmental efforts, upon which so much of the world depends. It is imperative for the United Nations to carry out its developmental mission with even greater vigour at a time of increasingly scarce resources and exploding populations. This is where the continued role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) can be especially critical, with additional resources and more effective programmes, particularly for vulnerable small island and landlocked States and States in Africa, where in a number of cases economic performance has fallen back rather than progressed since independence.

Notable gains have been made in several African countries. However, Africa's ability to rise out of chronic poverty can be attained only with continued international assistance, including forgiveness of its countries' external debt, without which many of them will remain trapped in the vicious circle of poverty, violence and natural or man-made disasters. In this regard, Malaysia reiterates its strong support for, and looks forward to, the convening of an international conference on financing for development in the year 2001 involving all major stakeholders, including the private sector. The convening of such a forum is imperative, as there can be no development without the necessary financing to support it.

Along with the Millennium Summit, this session of the General Assembly will be remembered for, among other things, paving the way for the kind of United Nations that will eventually emerge to serve the international community, at least in the early decades of the twenty-first century. While the shifting patterns of relationships among nations have yet to find a final form and the future is far from clear, there is no denying that in the increasingly complex and interconnected world of tomorrow, the United Nations is likely to play an increasingly critical role. To that end the Organization must continuously place itself at the forefront in the search for solutions to global problems.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal, His Excellency Mr. Jaime Gama.

Mr. Gama (Portugal) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation):* It is with the greatest pleasure that I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of this Millennium Assembly. I pay tribute also to the outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and reiterate to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, my praise for his vision and

for the remarkable and courageous manner in which he is carrying out his duties.

My French colleague has already addressed the Assembly on behalf of the 15 member States of the European Union, a statement with which my country fully associates itself.

I will now touch upon questions of particular importance to my country, Portugal.

As the Prime Minister stated here during the Millennium Summit, the United Nations finds itself at a turning point which necessarily calls for the exercise of reflection on the future of the Organization. In this era of increasing globalization, we should give the United Nations the means to accomplish the missions that we have entrusted it with, turning the Organization into the foundation of a more stable, united and cohesive international community.

The international community faces three great challenges at the turn of the millennium: to strengthen our action on behalf of peace, to contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty, and to guarantee environmental conditions conducive to perpetuating life on earth.

The increasing use of peacekeeping operations over the last decade, which we have encouraged, conclusively demonstrates their importance. The results that we have obtained on the five continents tell us with certainty that we have chosen the right path. To continue this effort effectively, the United Nations must have at its disposal the necessary resources, be they financial, technical, civilian, political or military.

A credible peacekeeping capacity is in itself a deterrent to conflicts and therefore an integral part of the global system of conflict prevention, of which the United Nations should be an essential component. In this regard, Portugal welcomed with satisfaction the Brahimi report on peace operations. We believe that its list of recommendations point the way to a process of reform that will strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building. We should take advantage of the momentum that has been created and concentrate on obtaining concrete results within the next year or two.

I would stress, however, that crucial questions will always be of a political nature. We must muster the necessary courage to broaden the scope of the responsibilities of the United Nations. Let us not deceive ourselves. As the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, stated, it is our function to intervene. Allow me to go ever further and to say that it is our duty to do so — to intervene in time, effectively and on the basis of international law.

Portugal is ready to do so, as it has shown in the past. We have participated in peacekeeping operations in Mozambique, Angola, the Central African Republic and Guatemala, and today we are participating in United Nations missions in East Timor, Bosnia, Kosovo and the Western Sahara, with more than 1,000 peacekeepers. Portugal is currently the 11th-largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping operations, and first among its European Union partners.

During the Portuguese presidency of the European Union, we gave decisive impetus to the creation of the European Union's capacities to intervene, which we see as being offered in the service of international peace and cooperation. In the year 2003, the Union will have at its disposal a force of 50,000 to 60,000 military personnel, to which 5,000 police will be added, as well as a civilian structure for crisis management.

This aspect of Portugal's external activities will continue to be favoured, and the importance we attach to them is equally reflected in our candidacy for the presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for the year 2002.

In a globalized world, the existence of tremendous economic asymmetries is a factor of permanent tension and conflict. Indeed, about half of the world's population lives on less than $2 a day.

The turn of the millennium is an opportunity for us to reaffirm our will to combat and eradicate poverty on a global scale. It may be a utopian vision at this point, but with our combined efforts it is a goal that may be within our reach.

In the time that it takes to deliver each of these statements in the General Assembly, around 300 children under the age of 1 will die. Is this acceptable? Obviously not. Could it be, then, that the human and financial resources necessary to fight this tragedy are so great that they force us into accepting it? The answer again is no. Many of those deaths could be avoided through better management and without an

increase in resources. Health, like education, should be a priority sector for development assistance.

It is vital to combine efforts, policies and instruments. Direct development assistance must be complemented by mechanisms to resolve the longstanding problems of the poorest countries through reform of the regulatory institutions of the global financial and economic system and through agreements that allow poor countries to access the markets of developed countries without trade barriers.

I should like to stress in particular the importance of developing cooperative mechanisms between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, namely a revitalized Economic and Social Council. Our priority should be to redefine the role of each institution and to avoid any duplication of effort in a field where the United Nations should play a leading role.

It is equally important to give responsibility to the countries receiving aid by demanding that funds be used efficiently or requiring good governance. In this regard I should like to emphasize that the fight against corruption should be a priority of all our Governments.

The Millennium Declaration states clearly that the principal challenge today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive reality for the entire population of the world, and not a new factor of exclusion.

Only the United Nations is in a position to promote the partnership for change that Kofi Annan referred to in his report entitled "We the peoples".

Poverty, sadly, is also closely linked to infection and to contagious diseases such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, which cause millions of deaths every year and which, in Africa, are laying waste to an entire generation and posing a tragic threat to future development. More than ever before, it is vital to mobilize the energies of civil society, institutions and the international community at large to fight infection and contagious diseases. The European Union and the United States recently agreed, at Lisbon, to strengthen their cooperation in the fight against those scourges.

Turning to the environment, we must always be mindful of the fact that economic growth and progress must not be achieved at any cost, least of all at the cost of the future. The United Nations must continue to guide the way on environmental matters, as it has since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. But the response from States has fallen short — often very short — of what we committed ourselves to do in political statements and even in international treaties. Let us not delude ourselves: the United Nations plays an instrumental role in this crucial, strategic area, as was reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration, but it is only States that can produce results. This is not a job that can be subcontracted to the United Nations.

Here, civil society should use all its influence, by bringing pressure to bear on and calling to account, Governments that think they can deal with environmental issues by opting out, as though they were simply matters of sovereignty. We can no longer think in that way. Global warming affects us all. To face this common problem, we need common action on a global scale.

For geographical, historical and political reasons, Portugal is a country that is linked to the oceans. For that reason, we recognize their importance both to the land ecosystem and to the renewal of energy resources vital to the sustenance of millions of people. We welcome the launching of an informal consultative process on the oceans and the law of the sea, and we attach particular importance to the debate on scientific research on marine matters.

Let me speak briefly about an initiative to which my country attaches great importance. In June, at Warsaw, a group of more than 100 countries, united by shared beliefs, endorsed a declaration entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies". The participants recognized that there was no single model to determine how the will of a people should be respected. The Community of Democracies will play a role in uniting the efforts of all countries that believe a representative democratic system to be the system that best meets that objective.

I wish now to speak of some regional matters that are of particular importance to my country. Africa is one of the great priorities of Portuguese foreign policy. The first Africa-Europe Summit was held during the Portuguese presidency of the European Union, and on the basis of a Portuguese proposal. The Summit opened new vistas in the relationship between Europe and Africa which will surely make possible a joint process of reflection on the challenges and problems that the

two continents face. The second Africa-Europe Summit will be held at Lisbon in 2003.

West Africa is at present one of our main concerns on the continent. In that connection I would mention the situation in Casamance in Senegal; the recent conflict in Guinea-Bissau, from which the country is only now beginning to recover; the serious conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia; the problem of refugees from those countries and their consequences for Guinea; and the instability along the borders of all those countries.

The persistence and potential spread of those tensions and conflicts seriously threaten the security of the entire subregion of West Africa, which could have grave political, economic and humanitarian consequences. It is therefore necessary for the international community to give greater attention to this sensitive region of Africa while there is still time.

With respect to Angola, we deeply regret the fact that the war is continuing, which we believe is due to the lack of implementation of the Bicesse and Lusaka peace agreements, and to UNITA's violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In our view, those instruments continue to be the reference point for a political solution to the Angolan conflict. We welcome the strengthening of the sanctions regime against UNITA and reiterate our pledge to cooperate with the Security Council's sanctions Committee. We consider that the presence of the United Nations on Angolan territory continues to be of fundamental importance, from both a humanitarian and a political perspective. Only thus can the United Nations quickly step in to support any political solution that may emerge. I welcome the intention of the Angolan Government to organize elections and to hold them in 2001. Promotion of the values of tolerance and dialogue and of democratic principles is essential to guarantee a lasting peace.

One year after the referendum that allowed the people of East Timor finally to exercise their right to self-determination, the United Nations faces a new challenge: administering East Timor in its transitional period and creating the necessary foundations for a new independent and democratic State that will be a future member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries — and that we hope can be admitted to membership of the United Nations by 2001. Portugal has always supported East Timor and will continue to do so. Our total financial assistance, not counting our participation in the military component of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, will reach an estimated $50 million this year, and will remain at that level in 2001 and 2002. Much remains to be done, but the able leadership of Sergio Vieira de Mello and the exceptional qualities of Xanana Gusmão allow us to look to the future with optimism.

The tragic events that took place in Atambua on 6 September, in which three members of the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees lost their lives, deserve unanimous condemnation by the international community. They testify to the impunity with which the militias act in West Timor. Two days after those events, further militia activity took place along the border, which led to the death of 11 people, this time of Indonesian nationality, who were assisting various non-governmental organizations and international organizations. We welcome the swift response of the Security Council in adopting its resolution 1319 (2000) and in deciding to dispatch an evaluation mission to West Timor.

The new democratic Government of Indonesia has, in general, shown a spirit of cooperation. It is now time for it to honour its commitment to re-establish law and order in West Timor, disarming and dismantling its militias. Their continued existence destabilizes the transition process in East Timor and is an affront to the civilian and military authorities of Indonesia, disturbing the consolidation of the democratic regime in that country. For our part, we stand ready to work with the Indonesian Government, helping it to resolve this problem. It was in that spirit that the Portuguese Prime Minister proposed here last week a stability pact for East Timor. It is in that spirit that we will participate in the quadripartite summit to be held soon at Jakarta, which will bring together high-level representatives of Indonesia, East Timor, Australia and Portugal.

Guaranteeing peace, fighting poverty, protecting the environment and leaving a better world for future generations: that is our duty at the turn of the millennium. Only through democracy can Governments respond to those aspirations of our societies. Only a reformed and ever more democratic United Nations will be able to help us face this common challenge.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, His Excellency Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson.

Mr. Ásgrímsson (Iceland): Allow me, Sir, at the outset to congratulate you heartily on your election to the Presidency of this General Assembly. Finland is a close friend and partner within the Nordic community. We wish you success with this challenging task and pledge to you the full support of the Icelandic delegation.

The Millennium Declaration provides the commitments of the world community in the new century. To prevent conflicts, maintain international peace and security and make peace an achievable goal at the end of armed conflicts, we need to continue strengthening the United Nations and the international legal system as a whole. Iceland has always supported verifiable arms control and arms reduction measures and will continue to support realistic disarmament proposals aiming at maximum security with a minimum of weapons. It is appalling to note the enormous sums being spent on weapons, while the money could be used to significantly improve the lives of millions.

Today, when there is an obvious need to assess the United Nations ability to conduct peacekeeping operations, it has proved extremely important to have a Secretary-General who has such a deep knowledge of the matter through his own experience. I would like to commend the Secretary-General for taking the initiative to ask a panel of pro minent experts in the field to assess the situation. I welcome the Brahimi report. Its recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible.

Even though my country does not have a military, it has been able to participate in peacekeeping operations. It has done so in the Balkans by providing medical staff, policemen and experts in the fields of law, the media and women's rights. We have noted with interest the recommendations made in the Brahimi report concerning the non-military aspects of peace operations. We will be studying them carefully now that we are in the process of looking into how we can strengthen our contribution to peacekeeping in the future.

The report states that expressions of general support in the form of statements and resolutions must be followed up with tangible actions. We will be taking these words of wisdom seriously in our policy-making.

In the preparations for the Millennium Assembly, the Secretary-General encouraged Member States to engage more effectively in the international legal framework by acceding to a number of legal instruments. One to which Iceland has decided to accede is the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, it has not succeeded in reflecting the tremendous changes in the international arena which have taken place since its establishment. In order to ensure its credibility in years to come, the reform process has to be accelerated.

The rules of international law governing the relations between States are now well established; this also applies in the fields of human rights and humanitarian law. These rules set out the rights and obligations of States and individuals. But ground rules do not suffice if it is not possible to enforce them. There are mechanisms to ensure respect and compliance with these rules, such as the General Assembly, the Security Council and peacekeeping missions. As a complement to these mechanisms, an effective international court system should be available to bring those who breach these rules to justice, at the same time serving to deter potential perpetrators.

With this in mind, I believe that the greatest achievements towards strengthening the international legal system in recent years have been the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunals for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and for Rwanda and the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Iceland has ratified the Rome Statute and encourages all other States to do so.

I welcome the proposal to include cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe in the agenda of this session of the General Assembly. I had the honour of chairing the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe last year. I am therefore well aware of the important contribution made by the Council to peace and stability in Europe, especially in the field of human rights. The United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Council of Europe and other organizations

responded to the serious situation in the Balkans by joining forces and working together to make reconstruction achievable.

In Kosovo, the politically motivated and inter-ethnic violence must be stopped. Rogue elements cannot be allowed to destroy possibilities created by the international community. One ethnic group must not be allowed to win at the expense of another. The Kosovars have been provided with a unique opportunity to build a just community in the region — a community where the fundamental freedoms and rights of every individual and minority group are respected. Only by utilizing this opportunity are Kosovars going to be able to build a stable foundation for lasting peace and stability for future generations. The same can be said about similar situations elsewhere in the Balkans, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The international community has taken on an enormous task in building a whole new civic structure within Kosovo. The development of a legal system and free media have been two challenging tasks. The elections to take place in October are also going to be challenging. Hopefully, they can be carried out in an orderly and peaceful manner.

It is very important to include women in the political process. In this respect, I would like to commend the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the good work carried out in Kosovo, not only in the political field but also in fighting violence against women and in promoting women's participation in economic activities.

The importance of human rights in securing long-term stability and security, both within and between countries, cannot be overestimated. It is therefore essential that no compromises be accepted in this field, and our aims should remain high.

The Security Council should be commended for discussing the grave humanitarian crisis and security threat posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and also for discussing the issue of children and armed conflict. The discussion in the Council has served to concentrate the attention of the international community on these issues and led the way for others to take the measures required. Both issues affect children in a very serious manner. I expect them to feature prominently on the agenda of next year's special session to follow up the World Summit for Children. I also welcome the decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly on the enormous problem of HIV/AIDS and international efforts to combat it.

The rights of women were significantly enhanced with the adoption last year of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Iceland has signed the Protocol and is preparing its ratification.

I cannot fail to condemn the terrible plight of those women around the world who are still enduring major human rights abuses, including female genital mutilation and trafficking, as well as severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and the right to work.

During the Millennium Summit, the Prime Minister of Iceland signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Iceland welcomes their adoption and hopes that they will further secure the human rights of children.

We have to put extra effort into working towards the elimination of racial discrimination. It is worrying to note the trend towards increasing racism and xenophobia in certain parts of the world, including Europe. This needs to be fought at all levels. The World Conference to be held in South Africa next year will without doubt play an important role. Iceland welcomes this Conference and feels that, in the light of history, South Africa is a very appropriate venue for it.

As reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, "We the peoples", fighting poverty remains one of the main challenges to the United Nations. People living in poverty do not have the opportunity to exercise many of their fundamental rights and freedoms. They cannot benefit from the possibilities of globalization. We need to reverse the current trend, as decided at the Millennium Summit. But more needs to be done. Globalization and new technologies offer many opportunities to reduce poverty at a faster rate than in the past.

We have been strengthening our development cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally. At the bilateral level, we have concentrated on a group of African countries with a focus on strengthening their fishing industry and education and health areas, with the potential to positively alter the lives of people in need. On the multilateral level, we will be contributing to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative

through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Most of our decisions are based on compromises, in which each and every one of us has to give a little in order to reach an agreement. It is very important to keep this in mind, not only when we discuss substance, but also when the time comes for us to pay our dues, both to the regular budget and to the peacekeeping budget. It is crucial for the good functioning of this Organization that all Members pay their contributions fully, on time and without any conditions.

In recent years, the oceans of the world have received increased attention in the General Assembly. We welcome this development. Iceland's economy is based on the sustainable harvest of living marine resources. The health and responsible stewardship of the oceans are therefore of critical importance to us. Last year, we resolved to improve United Nations coordination in the area of ocean affairs. Towards that end, we established an Informal Consultative Process to discuss the Secretary-General's report on the oceans and the law of the sea. I was pleased with the implementation of this decision of the first Meeting of this Process last spring.

However, we must act carefully when seeking to improve our coordination and cooperation in this area. Ocean issues must be addressed at the appropriate level and be consistent with the rights and obligations laid down in the Convention on the Law of the Sea. We must fully respect the sovereign right of States over their natural resources and the competence of existing international organizations. Above all, the integrity of the Convention must be preserved. We must be mindful that the Convention provides the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

The United Nations specialized agencies have an important role to play in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. A key area in this respect is marine scientific research. We need more accurate and policy-oriented information on the state of the oceans. Coordination towards that end would be a worthy task for the new Informal Consultative Process on Ocean Affairs.

At the onset of a new millennium, it is more pressing than ever before to ensure the access of people in the developing countries, especially in rural areas, to readily available and sustainable energy. Today, about one third of the world's population does not have such access, and this situation is obviously a serious obstacle to the development of these communities. In my country, we have been able to bring sustainable energy to all households in the country. We are sharing our experience and knowledge with the developing countries through the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme, which is located in Iceland and funded by my Government.

The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio created a momentum for building a secure future for humankind and life on Earth under the banner of sustainable development. Soon, world leaders will meet again at a global conference to take stock of the progress made in meeting these challenges, laid down in Agenda 21 and the other Rio agreements. It is indeed true that we have not been able to live up to all the expectations raised in Rio, but we should not fail to acknowledge the progress that we have made.

The concept of sustainable development has truly become accepted as a fundamental guiding strategy in environmental and socio-economic affairs. In my own country, which is dependent on fisheries, we believe that we are reaping the benefits of the sustainable-use regime for our fish stocks in the form of a healthy ecosystem and a robust economy. Regional and international efforts to prevent the pollution of the oceans have continued to gather strength and we can expect further efforts, in particular to control pollution from land-based sources.

It is my belief that, in charting a course for the future, we should be looking at success stories and learning from them, rather than concentrating on the obstacles we face. Let us be guided by the doers, but not the doom-sayers.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to convey to you, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, our sincere congratulations and regards on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your experience in international affairs will contribute to the success of this session's proceedings. We also thank your predecessor, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the efficient manner in which

he directed the work of the previous session. I would also like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his prudent leadership and for the efforts he exerts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace, security and stability in the world.

The convening of the Millennium Summit a few days ago in this world forum was a clear embodiment of the political will of the leaders of the world to deal effectively with the problems and challenges that face the international community, such as the proliferation of proscribed weapons, armed conflicts and increasing poverty and debt, as well as other attendant transnational issues, such as drugs, organized crime, international terrorism, environmental pollution, persistent violations of human rights and the disparities resulting from globalization and information technology.

The consequences of these prevailing conditions have, more than ever before, reinforced our awareness of the importance of adhering to the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and of consolidating the rule of international law through the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for the principle of equality and the right to self-determination, as well as of strengthening the spirit of cooperation and tolerance among the different cultures, beliefs and legacies of the various civilizations, for achieving the desired security, stability and human development.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its welcome of the border treaties concluded between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and both the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Yemen, as an important political and historic event that will promote confidence-building measures and good neighbourly relations. At the same time, we call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to follow the example of those fraternal States and to respond to our peaceful initiatives that call for either entering into direct and serious bilateral negotiations aimed at finding a peaceful solution for ending Iran's occupation of our three islands Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, or agreeing to submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice.

In this context, we would like to reaffirm that all actions and measures taken unilaterally by the Islamic Republic of Iran on those three islands and its continued construction of military and civilian installations on them, are illegal measures considered null and void, and do not establish or entail any legal rights, regardless of the duration of the occupation. In fact, they represent a violation of the territorial sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates and contravene the principles and purposes of the Charters of both the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as declared Iranian peaceful intentions in the region.

More than a year has elapsed since the Gulf Cooperation Council entrusted a tripartite Ministerial Committee, composed of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar, with developing a mechanism for direct negotiations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran has not yet responded to any of the endeavours of that Committee, thus preventing the reinforcement of the foundations of peace and security in the Arab Gulf region.

Despite the fact that almost ten years have elapsed since the end of the second Gulf War, the Arab Gulf region is still experiencing the negative effects of that War. Consequently, it is imperative that political and diplomatic efforts continue in order to find a peaceful solution that would lead to ending the human suffering of the Iraqi people. At the same time, we invite the Iraqi Government to cooperate by completely fulfilling its obligations, particularly those relating to the release of Kuwaiti and other countries' prisoners of war or detainees and to the restitution of Kuwaiti property, in implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council. In this regard, we would like to underline the importance of respecting the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of both Iraq and Kuwait, as well as refraining from the threat or use of force, in order to ensure the entrenchment of security and stability in the region.

The Middle East peace process recently witnessed important developments during which major efforts were exerted with the objective of arriving at equitable and fair solutions based on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace. Yet, despite all those efforts and all the flexible and constructive proposals put forward by the Palestinian side for finding a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestine issue in all its aspects, the Israeli Government persisted in its positions of procrastination, delay and stalling, and in failing to

abide by the agreements it had concluded with the Palestinian side.

Thus, in affirming our position of solidarity with the fraternal Palestinian people and their leadership, represented by the Palestinian Authority, we renew our call to the co-sponsors of the peace process — in particular the United States of America — and the other active States to continue exerting political and diplomatic efforts that support and promote negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, with the aim of finding a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestine issue. In particular this settlement should resolve the issues of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the refugees, on the basis of Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). This should enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights to return to their homeland and to establish their own independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Also in this context we reaffirm our unceasing support of the position of sisterly Syria in its efforts to regain its Golan territory up to the line of 4 June 1967. We call on the international community to demand that Israel resume negotiations on the Syrian track on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, in the interest of attaining peace, stability and growth for all the States and peoples of the region.

The United Arab Emirates, in welcoming once again fraternal Lebanon's regaining of its territory, expresses support for Lebanon's efforts to complete the extension of its sovereignty over all of its national soil.

In the same vein, we support the demands of sisterly Libya that the economic sanctions imposed on it be lifted, particularly since it has implemented relevant Security Council resolutions.

We also express our satisfaction at the outcome of the recent Somali reconciliation conference in Djibouti and invite all Somali factions to reinforce national unity for the sake of restoring peace, stability and sustainable development to Somalia and the rest of the region of the Horn of Africa.

The growing number of problems resulting from the continuation of wars, disputes and ethnic cleansing in some parts of the African continent, the Balkans, South Asia, Afghanistan and other places is a source of constant concern for the international community. Consequently, we support all regional and international efforts aimed at dealing with these issues by peaceful means, and we emphasize that just and lasting resolution of these issues cannot be attained until the parties concerned demonstrate the necessary political will to achieve national reconciliation and demonstrate their commitment to implement relevant Security Council resolutions.

Despite international unanimity, shown in the Disarmament Conference and other international forums, regarding the need to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, progress in this field remains slow, which is a matter of concern to us. We are particularly concerned at this time as some States are striving to outdo each other in stockpiling certain classes of these weapons, in particular nuclear arms and ballistic missiles, as a means of settling their territorial disputes. Since such actions escalate conflicts and disrupt the strategic security balance, at both the regional and international levels, we call upon the States concerned to review their policies in this respect and to promote the establishment of zones that are free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, especially in the Middle East, the Arab Gulf and the Indian Ocean. We also urge the international community to demand once again that the Israeli Government accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and agree to subject its nuclear facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

Despite the multidimensional changes that the world economy is witnessing as a result of the deregulation of markets, globalization and modern technology, the economic and social gap between the developed and developing States still exists and is growing — thereby exacerbating poverty and unemployment, environmental degradation and debt accumulation. Thus, the convening of the Millennium Summit and the Summit's Declaration highlight the great importance our countries attach to these issues. This makes it incumbent on all of us to work assiduously on carrying out the commitments and undertakings contained therein regarding the creation of an environment favourable to development, elimination of poverty and free access for the exports of the least developed countries to the markets of industrialized countries. I confirm the determination of the United Arab Emirates to support this plan and to

work towards narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

The United Arab Emirates continues its sustained efforts in support of economic- and social-development projects in many countries of the world, particularly in Africa and Asia, be it through direct participation in financing such projects or by supporting international and regional efforts to attain those goals.

Finally, the ever-increasing burden of economic, social and human development, which is the first safeguard of the political stability that we desire, demands that mechanisms for regional and international cooperation, foremost among which is the United Nations, be created. Hence, we call for continued efforts to carry out the structural reform and development of the world Organization, in particular the Security Council and the General Assembly, so that the Organization can keep pace with the rapid changes in international relations.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Felipe Pérez Roque.

Mr. Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are living at a decisive moment in the history of humankind. More than half a century after the creation of the United Nations, on the threshold of a new millennium that was supposed to herald an era of peace among men, solidarity among nations and greater well-being for the poorest people, we are confronted instead by the most serious and complex economic, social, political and environmental crisis in the history of the human race.

The expectations of peace, stability and cooperation that the end of the cold war triggered throughout the world are far from becoming a reality. The emergence of a unipolar world in which a single super-Power is capable of militarily controlling the international scene, far from meaning greater security for our peoples, has ushered in a new stage in which the hegemonism of that sole super-Power prevails — direct or covert interventionism under the guise of multilateral actions, insecurity for the small countries, selfishness as a behavioural pattern in international relations and the attempt to disregard the principles of equality among States, national sovereignty, self-determination, non-intervention, the non-threat or the use of force and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means — principles that have constituted the cornerstone of the United Nations.

We are also living in a world characterized by the exploitation and the horrendous destitution of over 1.3 billion human beings, who, while suffering on a daily basis and without giving up the hope of a better life for their children, wonder if we will still have sufficient reasons to reaffirm faith in the fundamental rights of man and in the dignity and value of the human person, as proclaimed more than five decades ago by the founders of the United Nations.

The attempts at imposing by force and under pressure the so-called right of humanitarian intervention are at present the greatest threat to international peace and security. We all know that the small group of developed countries — led by the United States and its allies with powerful forces — that attempt to impose this perilous concept in the discussions and decisions of our Organization, do not have to fear the consequences of recognizing such a right in international relations. They are not, as we are, the Euro-Atlantic rim, defined by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the probable scene for their acts of aggression, and the new strategic doctrine of this alliance is not aimed at them, but at us, the poor countries.

Actions geared at fragmenting countries and nations, at recolonizing territories and re-establishing zones of influence must cease. The recent precedent of unleashing deadly wars against defenceless populations, without even consulting the Security Council, is not only a flagrant violation of the Charter, but it is also once again dragging the world into situations like those that once took over 40 million lives in a single war.

How many other wars against small, poor countries must be waged before we understand the need to respect the Charter and engage in a deep democratization process in international relations?

Is it possible that those who now buttress with threatening language their attempts at interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries have fallen for the idea that the serious problems of underdevelopment, the after-effects of colonialism, hunger, disease and the consequences of the constant pillaging of the third world countries — the real cause of current conflicts — can be resolved through use of smart bombs?

Is it not really paradoxical that Western Powers — while developing new, ever more sophisticated killing devices — intend to prevent poor countries from using conventional light weaponry that is essential to nations that, like Cuba, live under the permanent threat of military aggression? Enough of this hypocrisy and Pharisaic behaviour. The world will be really safer if total, complete disarmament takes place, including, especially, nuclear disarmament. There has to come a day when light weaponry will be eliminated, when other types of deadlier and more dangerous conventional arms — the much more dangerous and deadlier arms owned by a handful of developed countries — must also be disposed of — the sooner the better. Yes, mines must be eliminated, but the threats of aggression against poor countries must be eliminated long before that.

Will our planet, by any chance, be safer if the United States finally deploys its hallucinating, costly anti-missile defence system, through which that country's rulers deceive their own people by promising them protection against missiles when nobody knows really from where they could be launched?

Why does not the United Nations, instead of tamely following the hazardous death game with the Western Powers, focus its attention on the so-much trumpeted yet unfulfilled purpose of setting aside a portion of the nearly US$ 800 billion, currently used on military expenses, to promote development and try to save the victims of the silent war that, year after year, through disease and starvation, kills more than 11 million third-world children under 5 years of age?

In any case, peace will not be possible if there is no development for the over one hundred third-world countries that are presently observing, as stone guests, the irresponsible squandering of the wealthy, selfish consumer societies that insatiably eat up our children's future. Setting out to halve in 15 years the number of poor people that we now have is undoubtedly a remarkable endeavour, but how will the other half judge our goal if they are doomed to live as indigents all their lives?

What has become of the right to development that was once so solemnly proclaimed by this very General Assembly? Don't you think, dear colleagues, that the time has come for us to calmly and firmly set out to rescue the issue of the right to development as a United Nations priority? Isn't it precisely now — when nobody argues anymore about the resounding failure of the neo-liberal policies that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank imposed on third-world countries with a fundamentalist stubbornness to the benefit of transnational companies — that our peoples, united as a great alliance for the most basic rights, must seize the opportunity to demand that a more outstanding, decisive role in these affairs be played by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and this General Assembly?

Why should we continue to allow international cooperation to virtually disappear, just now when it is most needed? Are we entitled to continue discussing, year after year, without any concrete outcome, the right to development, which our people are demanding, while we watch, scattered and disoriented, as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank continue to strip the Organization of the prerogatives bestowed upon it by the Charter? Those who have imposed such devastating decisions as those leading to the unbridled privatization of the national resources of third world countries and the indiscriminate liberalization of the capital account — thereby facilitating the outflow of the scarce foreign currencies from poor countries that, because of expediency or fear, have not been able to fight for the rights of their peoples — will be held to account by their children and by history.

The Millennium Summit, which ended with positive results, demonstrated once again that the devastating effects of imposing a neo-liberal model in a globalized world are hitting third world countries particularly hard. The socio-economic situation of such countries — especially those in Africa — is virtually untenable. Likewise, it made it clear that unilateralism and duress have no place in a world in which solidarity and cooperation are the only possible means to achieve salvation for all.

In the wake of the Summit, no doubts remain: now is the time to act, to adopt concrete measures in order to fight the poverty and underdevelopment currently afflicting the majority of the people of the world. Cuba, a poor country that nonetheless has a large store of human capital, has already started to take action. Deeds, not words, are what we need today.

Two years ago, we put in place a comprehensive health-care plan under which almost 2,000 Cuban health workers are rendering services, free of charge, in

16 countries of Central America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. Now, given the urgent appeal of the African countries, we would like to reiterate the offer that President Fidel Castro made to the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the developed countries during the Millennium Summit to cooperate with Africa in the fight against AIDS and other terrible diseases currently threatening to wipe out an entire continent. Cuba is ready to supply up to 3,000 additional Cuban doctors and paramedics for such an undertaking in sub-Saharan Africa. They would also contribute to the training of African health workers in the field. But it is essential for the industrialized countries to do their share and to supply the necessary medicines and materials for the programme. Africa is waiting for us. Cuba stands ready. It is now up to the developed countries.

Democracy within countries is a goal that is being sought. That is certainly commendable if the diversity of cultures, identities, historical experiences, national realities and political models, and the right of each people to adopt, with complete independence, the system that it deems most appropriate, are properly respected. But is there truly any democracy in international relations at present? Unfortunately there is not.

In order to attain it, let us put an end to hegemonism, foster development, replace selfishness with cooperation and, finally, respect the purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter. We must put an end, right now, to the arrogance of the few if we do not want the hopes for a world of justice and peace for all to crumble.

In order to attain it, let us ensure that the United Nations truly contributes to building solidarity among nations and not to the domination of a few over the overwhelming majority. Let us face up to the attempt of some to put pressure on the United Nations through the non-payment of agreed contributions. Let us reject the use of the United Nations to impose a new colonial order. Let us demand that the Security Council act as the representative of all, not as the servant of one. Let us prevent it from arrogating to itself powers that it does not have, thereby violating the United Nations Charter and operating without due transparency while it decides upon matters of life or death.

Democratizing the United Nations and its Security Council requires, as indispensable measures, the abolition of the vexing and anachronistic veto privilege; an increase in the number of Council members in proportion to the fourfold increase in the number of States Members of the Organization; the application of the principle of equitable geographical representation to the composition of that body, as with all others; and the fulfilment of its obligation, as enshrined in the Charter but ignored in practice, of reporting to the General Assembly.

Let us be realistic. Security Council reform is — I will not mince words — as far away today as it ever was. We should recognize that after seven years of fruitless efforts we have managed to agree only that it is necessary to increase the number of members of the Council. At this point, therefore, we believe that we should at least work to effect a proportional increase in the total number of Council members, both permanent and non-permanent, ensuring adequate representation for third world countries, as strongly reiterated by the Millennium Summit. How could the Security Council be expanded without the inclusion of a reasonable number of permanent members from the third world?

Forty years ago, on behalf of Cuba, the leader of a triumphant revolution proclaimed from this very rostrum the dreams of hope and social justice for which the Cuban people had struggled for almost a century. Most of the States now represented in this Assembly were colonies at that time. There was no talk then — as there is today — about saving Africa, while it was being ruthlessly pillaged. The time had not yet arrived when hundreds of thousands of Cubans would go to African lands to struggle for the real rights of its people, against apartheid, disease and illiteracy.

That was the moment when the United States Government set out to overthrow the Cuban revolution, which, committed to social justice and true independence for its people, threatened, through its ethics, its morality and its example, the secular domination that the United States had exercised over the entire western hemisphere. That was the moment when the economic, trade and financial blockade was implemented against Cuba — a blockade that, in the course of a harsh 40-year-old economic war, has engendered such shameful pieces of legislation as the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts. It has to do with the blockade that this very General Assembly has rejected for eight consecutive years and which is still in force despite worldwide rejection and the obvious disapproval of the people of the United States.

In these four decades, our people have resisted acts ranging from political pressures and attempts at diplomatic isolation to the most insidious lying campaigns, from subversion and terrorism to assassination attempts on its main leaders, from biological warfare to the most ruthless blockade and economic war and from the promotion of armed bands to military invasion and the threat of nuclear extermination. Today, on behalf of that same generous and courageous people, we can once again say to our third world brothers and to all those who anywhere in the world defend our right to life and development that revolutionary socialist Cuba will never cease to struggle for everyone's dreams.

Address by Mr. Salim Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic

Mr. Salim Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: Before giving the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, I would like to welcome the President, who has recently participated in the United Nations Millennium Summit. I am pleased to note that Somalia is participating again in the deliberations of the General Assembly after a long absence. As members of the Assembly are well aware, participants at the Djibouti peace process agreed on a Transitional National Assembly which then elected President Abdikassim Salad Hassam and he was sworn in at a ceremony held in Djibouti on 25 August.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Salad Hassan: It is a singular honour and privilege for me to be here today to address this session of the General Assembly. On this auspicious occasion, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election to this eminent position. Taking into account your Excellency's wide experience in international affairs, I am confident that you will successfully contribute to the work and deliberations before this Assembly.

Permit me also, Mr. President, to pay special tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, who conducted the affairs of the Assembly in a most successful manner during his term of office.

Our profound gratitude also goes to our able and dynamic Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who has shown exemplary leadership and demonstrated efficiency in managing the activities of our Organization. Indeed, he has played a pivotal role in the enhancement of the Organization's aims and objectives, and in furthering peace, stability and international cooperation the world over.

I am highly honoured to address this Assembly today in the presence of my colleague and brother, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti. In this regard, I would like to pay special tribute for the exceptional role played by His Excellency, his Government and the people of Djibouti in our recently concluded national reconciliation conference, held in Arta, a resort town near Djibouti.

In contrast to the previous 12 Somali reconciliation conferences, held in the past 10 years in various capitals, the Arta reconciliation conference was unique and more focused. While the previous reconciliation conferences were based on attempts to reconcile the personal differences and rivalries between power-seeking faction leaders, the Arta conference, on the other hand, concentrated essentially on the *constructive engagement* and *the interaction of the* various components of Somali society, such as traditional clan elders and sultans, religious leaders, intellectuals, politicians and representatives of the various sectors of Somali civil society. More than 2,000 delegates from inside and outside the country attended the conference, the deliberations of which continued for more than five months.

It was in the context of this transparent process that a consensus was reached on the agenda and criteria for participation in the conference, based on the balanced and equitable representation of the various clans in the country. In pursuance of this innovative approach, the conference conducted its business. This led to the general agreement on the adoption of a Transitional Charter. The Charter, inter alia, provided for the establishment of the basic constitutional organs of the Third Republic of the Somali State: the National

Assembly, the President, the Council of Ministers and an independent judiciary. In accordance with these transitional measures, the first organ the conference established was the National Assembly. In turn, the National Assembly elected the President in a fair and free manner in the presence of observers and representatives of the international community.

The outcome of the Arta reconciliation conference received an overwhelming endorsement of the Somali people within the country and in the diaspora. Strong messages of support and pledges poured into Arta from all regions of the country and from Somali communities abroad.

In contrast to anarchy and civil war, which prevailed in Somalia for the past 10 years, the creation of the National Assembly and the election of a President ushered in a new era for peace and stability and constituted the first step of restoring order and central authority to the country. This was indeed translated into reality during my recent visit to Mogadishu and Baidoa. The spontaneous reaction of the hundreds of thousands of people who welcomed us in both cities demonstrated vividly that they wanted to leave years of civil war behind and open a new era of peace, tranquillity, good governance, restoration of the rule of law and national unity.

In this connection, let me emphasize the fact that the majority of the Somali people in the regions that we were not able to visit, including the regions in the northwest and northeast of the country, uphold a shared commitment and optimism for the unity and future progress of the country.

With regard to the warlords and individuals who still remain outside the reconciliation process, we express our full preparedness to engage with them in peaceful dialogue, and we call upon them to review their positions, hear the voice of reason, and respect the legitimate aspirations of the Somali people to achieve national unity, social and economic development and durable peace throughout the country.

The challenges that the Somali Republic faces today are monumental. My Government is prepared to meet those challenges with a realistic approach. We understand that our country stands today in the midst of a crisis of serious proportions. We shall exercise care, compassion and objectivity to manage that crisis and overcome it in the end.

There has been large-scale destruction of the physical infrastructure and resources in both urban and rural areas. Generations of children have not gone to school for almost two decades. A good number of high-level managerial staff and skilled technicians have left the country. The role of the international community in assisting us in peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction is therefore of pivotal importance for us. There should be no relaxation by the international community in the overall effort to provide humanitarian and developmental assistance to the Somali Republic.

We will engage Somali professionals and technical experts inside and outside the country to be actively involved in all reconstruction programmes and projects. We will also give indigenous and international non-governmental organizations and relevant United Nations agencies all the necessary assistance to be able to contribute effectively to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country.

I would like to emphasize that my Government will place particular emphasis in the immediate future on the following priority areas: first, restoration of peace, stability and national unity, and the formation of an effective security force to consolidate them; secondly, disarmament of the militias and their encampment, subsequent rehabilitation and training in all the regions of the country; and, thirdly, maintenance of law and order through the creation of effective law enforcement agencies and professional courts of law. Within the framework of that policy, my Government will promote and consolidate peace, security and unity in the country at large.

At the international level, we reaffirm our unqualified support for the principles and objectives of the United Nations and pledge to cooperate with relevant regional and subregional organizations, namely, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development. We shall also maintain and strengthen our relations with the European Union. We would like to open up new vistas of cooperation and economic ties with other organizations, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

My Government will promote strong links of cooperation with the countries of the Horn of Africa

and the Red Sea based on the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, as provided in the Charter of the United Nations. We will promote economic partnership, open borders and common port services among the countries of the Horn of Africa.

In conclusion, my delegation requests the Assembly to facilitate the adoption of a resolution under the title "Assistance to the Somali Republic" relating to the following areas of need: first, urgent assistance from Member States for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Somalia; secondly, resumption of sustained economic cooperation with the international community in general and with Member States of the United Nations in particular; and, thirdly, a call on relevant United Nations agencies and organizations to redouble their efforts in providing financial and material assistance to the people of Somalia.

Finally, I extend my profound appreciation to the United Nations for the commendable role it has played in the efforts to alleviate the plight of the Somali people during the last 10 years. We also wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of the world body in its continued search for a solution to our political crisis throughout the decade, and for its continued humanitarian support and assistance to the Somali people. I am confident that the United Nations will continue to provide support for the realization of the aspirations of the Somali people to stability, peace and development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Somali Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, His Excellency The Honourable Phil Goff.

Mr. Goff (New Zealand): I begin by joining others who have congratulated you, Mr. President, on your election. I also assure you of the New Zealand delegation's full cooperation as you carry out your important duties.

I also welcome the admission last week of our neighbour and friend Tuvalu into the United Nations. The admission of four new Pacific nations in the space of a year contributes to the truly universal character of the Organization.

This general debate is taking place at the start of a new century and a new millennium. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called upon the Member States of the United Nations to harness the symbolic power of the millennium to meet the real and urgent needs of people in every part of the world. This is an appropriate time to recommit ourselves to the beliefs, the values and the principles that led to the birth of the Organization 55 years ago.

Like many other Members of the Organization, New Zealand is a small country that tries to take a principled and independent view of the world. In 1945, in San Francisco, we played an active part through the Labour Prime Minister of the day, Peter Fraser, in framing the Charter in which heads of State and Government reaffirmed their faith here last week.

We have always viewed the maintenance of international peace and security, and the practical task of peacekeeping, as key roles of the United Nations. We are currently making our largest-ever contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in East Timor. This commitment underlines our full support for the central role of the United Nations in building a stable, democratic and economically viable East Timor in partnership with its people. So do the non-military personnel and development assistance we have provided to help the East Timorese create essential services.

Just over a year ago, the East Timorese people voted overwhelmingly for an independent future, and I had the privilege of being part of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) group that oversaw that electoral process. We recall the horrors which followed as pro-integration militias laid waste to the territory, slaughtered innocent people and forced thousands of East Timorese into West Timor.

Relative calm and stability has been restored in most of East Timor, and we remember here today the sacrifices made by peacekeepers from Australia, Bangladesh, Nepal and my own country who in recent

months laid down their lives to help achieve this. But the militias continue to hold sway in the border areas among the refugees in West Timor. Unless brought under control, these militias will destabilize both West and East Timor.

The murder last week of three United Nations humanitarian workers in Atambua in West Timor repelled us all. New Zealand was able to respond quickly, along with Australia, to the United Nations call for help in evacuating their colleagues and non-governmental organization personnel from Atambua. We committed helicopters with security and medical elements from our forces serving on the border with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). This airborne evacuation, which had the cooperation of Indonesian forces, was successful. But the pain and the outrage we feel at the murder of three United Nations humanitarian workers remains undiminished.

The Security Council, in its resolution 1319 (2000), insisted that the Government of Indonesia disarm and disband the militia immediately to ensure safety and security in the refugee camps and for humanitarian workers, and to prevent cross-border incursions into East Timor. It also called for those who have carried out attacks on international personnel to be brought to justice. These are binding obligations. The world awaits action to implement them without further delay.

Besides East Timor, New Zealand is at present contributing to 12 other peacekeeping operations, including in Kosovo, on the borders of Syria, Israel and Lebanon, in the Prevlaka peninsula and in Sierra Leone. New Zealand personnel also serve with the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville, the Multinational Force Organization (MFO) in Sinai and with the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia. Being conscious of the many challenges faced by the United Nations in meeting its peacekeeping responsibilities, we greatly welcome the Brahimi report. We trust that the report's important recommendations will receive serious and expeditious consideration during this Millennium Assembly session, with a view to their early implementation.

As the Brahimi report points out, weak mandates and poor resourcing underlie most of those operations which did not succeed in their objectives. We are concerned too at the tendency to rely overly on "coalitions of the willing" to carry out operations that should be undertaken by the United Nations. The failure of some Member States to pay their assessed contributions on time, in full and without conditions imposes an impossible burden on the Organization and on troop contributors. We agree that the scale of assessments for peacekeeping needs revision to make it more equitable and transparent. Any revision must be established in accordance with the longstanding principle of apportioning expenses according to Member States' capacity to pay.

Heads of State or Government agreed at the Millennium Summit to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. In the past seven years of debate on this matter, it has been shown just how difficult an issue it is, especially in regard to how the Council might be enlarged. There is no agreement on this aspect at this time. And yet I am sure that most Member States would agree that the Council must be made more representative of today's membership as well as more transparent in its working methods and more democratic in its decision-making. If there is to be progress towards an overall package deal on reform, then compromises will have to be made.

At the heart of any reform, in New Zealand's view, must be the curtailment of the veto, if indeed it cannot be eliminated. We have argued this case since 1945, and we believe that it is even more relevant today. A device which 50 years ago might have had the utility of preventing the permanent members from using the Organization to make war on one another has in recent times served to frustrate the will of the wider membership. I believe there is very broad agreement in the General Assembly on the need to deal with the veto urgently, so that the Security Council can be more effective in carrying out its important responsibilities.

I would not want to suggest that there has been no progress at all on Council reform. There have, in fact, been some major steps forward in opening up the Council's meetings and briefings to participation by non-members. We are grateful for that. I would also like to reaffirm New Zealand's strong support for the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, whose deliberations have contributed to this progress. In our view, the Working Group continues to be the appropriate forum in which to pursue efforts aimed at reforming the Council, because it is essential for the health of the Organization that any reform

package enjoy the widest support and buy-in. Council reform is too important a matter for back-room deals.

The Millennium Declaration contains some important guidance on human rights, democracy and good governance. For example, all countries are enjoined to strengthen their capacity to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights. This could not be more timely for my own region, the South Pacific, where over the past year we have seen the collapse of democracy and governance in some countries in the face of disputes over land and economic disparities and as a result of ethnic tensions.

There are no easy solutions to some of the problems the region faces, but one thing is clear, and that is that the answer to these problems is not to adopt political systems that discriminate against particular ethnic groups, as some in Fiji this year have sought to do. To do so simply breeds a deeper sense of frustration and exclusion, which is a recipe for further instability. Small States, especially small developing countries like our neighbours in the Pacific, face particular challenges from globalization. They are uniquely vulnerable to external impacts. We need to find fresh and more effective means to development.

It is essential to help countries build for themselves inclusive and democratic forms of government that in turn take account of cultural values. Underpinning this must be robust and accountable institutions, respect for the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, an effective press, strong civil society and, above all, greater public education to foster a more widespread understanding of democratic values and processes.

The Millennium Summit provided heads of State or Government the opportunity to take action on a range of treaties which are fundamental to the development of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. My Prime Minister took action in respect of six, and I record here in particular New Zealand's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The practices of child prostitution, child pornography and the appalling exploitation of children to fight wars are a disgrace and a crime against humanity which must be expunged. We encourage others also to sign and ratify these agreements. I should also add that we greatly welcome the recent decision by the Economic and Social Council to establish a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. The outcome of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in May, where the five nuclear-weapon States gave an unequivocal political undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, demonstrates a new determination to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. This is a matter of real urgency. We must promote the implementation of the new commitments. New Zealand, with its new agenda partners, will submit a draft resolution during this session of the General Assembly.

New Zealand will also, in partnership with Brazil, promote a southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons. In addition, we will, along with Australia, Mexico and Japan, urge all countries that have yet to do so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We will also support further preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and join calls for adherence to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

New Zealand urges caution regarding decisions on missile developments that could impact negatively on nuclear disarmament, lead to a new nuclear arms race or be inconsistent with the commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This is no time for complacency. The United Nations disarmament and arms-control machinery must engage again in negotiations and other work on the new programme of action agreed at the NPT Conference.

Leaders also declared their resolve to minimize the adverse effects of United Nations economic sanctions on innocent populations. Sanctions are an important tool at the Security Council's disposal to encourage compliance with its resolutions, but they must be appropriately targeted for maximum effect. They should not impose blanket measures which harm

innocent populations and even strengthen the grip of despotic regimes. We support efforts within the Organization to develop proposals for smarter, more effective sanctions which apply pressure where it we will have maximum impact.

The Millennium Declaration also speaks of the need to protect our common environment. My Prime Minister announced during the Summit our intention to become party to the Kyoto Protoco to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by mid-2002. I also wish to recall a particular achievement over the past year in the holding of the inaugural session of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Ocean Affairs and the law of the sea. This is a significant step forward in providing an appropriate forum for discussion of cross-cutting oceans issues. The success of this process should be judged by the extent to which there is enhanced global understanding of oceans issues and an increased willingness to cooperate and coordinate cross-sectorally to address them.

Finally, the Millennium Declaration sets some key goals for development and poverty eradication and urges meeting the special needs of Africa. This year, New Zealand was able to increase its core funding of the United Nations Development Programme by more than a third and of the United Nations Children's Fund by almost a half. We believe that the United Nations has a key role to play in the coordination of official development assistance delivery. The preparations for the event on financing for development are an excellent demonstration of leadership by the Organization and a significant step forward in furthering cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions. The crushing and seemingly never-ending debt burden, especially on the countries of Africa, must be urgently reduced. We must also address more effectively the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

Leaders at last week's Summit provided this Millennium Assembly with a clear direction and a strong mandate. Our countries have delegated us the responsibility to realize that vision of a better world and we must ensure through our efforts and determination that we do not fail them.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Charles Providence Gomis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Gomis (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you preside over the work of the General Assembly at this fifty-fifth session. You may count on my delegation's support.

I should also like to pay an unqualified tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the quality of the work accomplished during his term of office, and to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a great African of whom we are all proud, for his commitment to strengthening the universal role and the credibility of our Organization.

The United Nations family is growing day by day, for which we all rejoice. That is why my delegation welcomes the Republic of Tuvalu.

Before addressing the situation prevailing in my country, I wish to share some of our concerns about the international situation.

The challenges of the third millennium are not new. They have been broadly outlined by the Secretary-General in his report, entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". For the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, given the difficulties facing the international community, the issue is above all the need to draw up new solutions in adhering to carefully established priorities.

As the Secretary-General stresses in his millennium report,

> "the 1 billion people living in developed countries earn 60 per cent of the world's income, while the 3.5 billion people in low-income countries earn less than 20 per cent". (*A/54/2000, para. 69*)

Furthermore, the technological progress that has been achieved in computer science and communications, which we welcome, has unfortunately also created a digital gap that has further marginalized the poor countries.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

If, for the time being, we acknowledge the advantages of globalization, it does seem to us that it is not taking sufficient account of the concerns of developing countries, particularly those in Africa. In fact, the rate of Africa's participation in international

trade is still below two per cent. In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly, the degree of poverty is almost the same as it was 20 years ago. This is why we would earnestly appeal for Africa's integration and involvement in those efforts to build a new architecture of the world economy. Poverty and deprivation, which are the daily lot of peoples in the developing countries, are further exacerbated by the debt burden on their economies.

In the particular case of my country, I would like to emphasize that, even under the current difficult circumstances, my Government continues to allocate 52 per cent of its budgetary earnings to paying off its external debt, and, quite naturally, this is to the detriment of the priority programmes relating to health, education and food self-sufficiency. Adding to this, we must not overlook inflation and speculation, which lead to fluctuations in our commodity prices.

In addition to our main preoccupation, which is combating poverty, Côte d'Ivoire believes that to resolve conflicts, preventive diplomacy must be strengthened and seen as a complementary dimension to peacekeeping operations in the field. The conflicts that beset the world have meant that peacekeeping operations, which have become more and more complex, are now in the forefront of United Nations activities. Preparing for, organizing, setting up in the field and financing these operations requires considerable effort and considerable means. Those conducted in recent years throughout the world, particularly in Africa, have unfortunately not had the results we had hoped for. The experience of the "Blue Helmets" in Sierra Leone is illustrative of this.

We hope that the excellent report of Ambassador Brahimi, who has put forward new guidelines for United Nations peacekeeping operations in the twenty-first century, will be given the attention by States Members that they deserve, so that acting on these recommendations will endow our Organization with the means it needs to play the role which it should in preserving international peace and security.

We very much welcome the conclusions of Beijing Plus Five and the commitments which have been entered into in order to bring about the advancement of women. We are convinced that these commitments will make it possible for women to fully exercise all their rights and to finally achieve full and complete equality. Côte d'Ivoire, which was actively involved in the work of this important meeting, commits itself, for its part, to working for the implementation of the targets set.

May I, at this juncture in my statement, refer to the question of the much-needed structural reform of the United Nations, particularly that of the Security Council. In these new circumstances, Côte d'Ivoire would like to reaffirm the position held by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which is claiming two permanent seats and two new non-permanent seats in the Council.

To return to matters in Côte d'Ivoire, and the situation prevailing there, I would like to recall that on 24 December 1999, my country underwent its first experience of an institutional change taking place apart from the balloting boxes. In fact, on the day before that, a military mutiny, on the part of soldiers who were claiming better living conditions, resulted in the toppling of the existing constitutional order. This unexpected speeding up of events in my country aroused, and continues to arouse, major concern within the international community, a concern and an anxiety which points to the interest that the international community attaches to my country. Up until now, Côte d'Ivoire, considered as a haven of peace and an oasis of stability, and recognized as a driving force in the economy of the subregion, particularly of those countries that constitute the West African Economic and Monetary Union, has been playing an important and irreplaceable part as a regulatory force in West Africa. The millions of our brothers who have come from countries in the subregion, and who live in my country, are substantially responsible for generating the money circulating in their countries of origin. If this country, Côte d'Ivoire, were to implode, it would have unforeseen consequences for the process of solidarity and sharing.

On 23 July, the Ivorian people expressed themselves through a referendum on the new draft constitution and electoral code placed before it by the transitional Government. It should be recalled that the military arm was involved neither in the drafting of the new constitution nor in that of the new electoral code. The political parties, social and professional organizations, the administrative regions of the country, religious organizations, women's and youth associations and non-governmental organizations — in other words, civil society — were those who, through their freely appointed representatives, drafted and submitted to the Government these new fundamental

texts that the Government, in turn, simply placed before the populace for its approval.

This consultation, the transparency of which was very much heralded by the international community, was characterized by a massive turn-out of the electorate of 86.23 per cent. We believe that this result should, in itself, be enough to put an end to the discussions and speculations that preceded and followed the referendum, the tone of which, in many respects, was not to the liking of the people of the Côte d'Ivoire and their friends.

We welcome the efforts made by the United Nations, the European Union, the OAU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in order to try and bring about common ground among the political circles in Côte d'Ivoire and to support the transitional process. Therefore, the international community should be reassured that the people of Côte d'Ivoire will, on 22 October of this year, express their wishes through fair and transparent elections for candidates whose eligibility has been established by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court.

To spend time today still talking about the requirements for eligibility, as contained in the texts that have been adopted, would be an attempt tantamount to trying to perpetuate a discussion whose fate has already been definitely, once and for all, sealed by the people of Côte d'Ivoire.

Trained in the school of the founding father of modern Côte d'Ivoire, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the apostle of peace, and belonging as we do to a subregion that has been beset by conflicts, some of which have taken place at the very gates of Ivorian territory, the people of Côte of d'Ivoire are only too well aware of the importance of peace. The people are determined to preserve peace without backsliding or compromise.

My country is not xenophobic, nor is it a place of exclusion. Côte d'Ivoire is still the only country in the world where foreigners account for more than 40 per cent of the total population. The problems of all kinds that arise from this unparalleled immigration — social, economic and even political — are real. The country is addressing and coping with them as best it can. We do not wish our brothers and sisters, who are living on very good terms with the Ivorian population, to leave.

In this respect, we are very proud of being the most integrationist country of the Economic Community of West African States and we intend to remain so. That is why we believe that the desire of the Ivorian people to offer one single political post, that of President of the Republic, to a citizen of established background should not serve as a pretext for spreading malicious rumours about our country and its people.

In this connection, we are counting on the understanding and support of the international community to help us successfully through this transition and, within our self-imposed schedule, to achieve the state of constitutional normality that our people so earnestly desires.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) *(spoke in Persian, interpretation provided by the delegation)*: Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to assure him of the full cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the discharge of his important responsibilities. I wish also to register our appreciation for the efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia. My thanks and gratitude also go to our Secretary-General for his tireless and constructive endeavours on behalf of the Organization.

The world is currently undergoing the most radical changes ever experienced by mankind. In such a rapidly changing environment, the main challenge facing the United Nations is to keep pace with events and try to play a leading role in directing their course in a way more compatible with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the world's population. The recently concluded Millennium Summit provided a unique opportunity for global leaders to draw up a collective agenda for addressing this historic challenge.

As the sole universal body, the United Nations is uniquely positioned to be the instrument of democratic global change. It can help to ensure that the process of change and transformation in the global system is participatory and fair. The focus of our attention at the global level over the past 55 years has been on the preservation of international peace, security and stability. Despite the tremendous economic and technological progress that has been achieved, justice

and universal participation in decision-making and in the benefits of peace and progress have attracted less global attention and fewer resources.

As the Secretary-General points out in his millennium report, the benefits and costs of globalization have not been evenly distributed. While world trade has increased more than ten-fold since 1950, over half of the world population continues to live on less than $2 a day and three quarters of the world population earn less than 20 per cent of total global income. The common destiny of humanity in the age of globalization requires us to reject the illusion of building islands of affluence, prosperity and stability in a turbulent sea of war, poverty, disease, ignorance and insecurity.

Globalization is an economic, social and cultural reality. It should not just be allowed to happen — it is a reality that we can and should collectively manage. One key task is to ensure that the benefits of globalization are more evenly distributed. The millennium report of the Secretary-General sets out a number of realistic and quantifiable targets. Necessary resources need to be committed and those who have been mostly on the receiving end of the benefits of globalization have an added responsibility. The United Nations machinery should direct and coordinate bilateral and multilateral efforts in this regard.

Globalization has also further complicated the global menaces of terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, necessitating the adoption of common and rule-based strategies to fight and eradicate them. Terrorism afflicts the entire international community and must thus be combated in its entirety, regardless of who its victims or perpetrators may be. In a globalized world, nothing can justify harbouring or providing safe haven to terrorists or condoning their activities. No nation can fight terrorism unilaterally. We need universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive mechanisms to fight terrorism wherever it occurs and to deprive terrorists of their means of recruitment, operation and funding.

The role of the United Nations in this regard is indispensable. In this context, particular attention needs to be focused on cooperation in the field of transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, which, in addition to inflicting their own banes on humanity, increasingly provide income to terrorist organizations. We are prepared to participate actively in any endeavour to combat this scourge.

The menace of drug abuse and trafficking continues to take a heavy social, economic and political toll. It particularly afflicts young people, who embody the future. Combating drug trafficking is a costly exercise and requires international political will and serious burden-sharing. The provision of meaningful financial resources and modern equipment by target countries can enable transit countries, such as ours, to combat the problem at a fraction of the cost.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has done more than its fair share in preventing transit, seizing more than 70 per cent of all narcotics confiscated worldwide. The financial burden and, more importantly, the human sacrifice are unsustainable. More than 2,900 Iranian drug enforcement personnel have been martyred in the fight against drug traffickers. We appreciate the cooperation and support extended to Iran by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme in this regard, although its limited resources cannot cover the programmes it wants and needs to implement. It is important to stress that, in the absence of meaningful bilateral and multilateral assistance, the Islamic Republic of Iran will have to allocate most resources to combating domestic consumption and will not be able to sustain its fight against drug trafficking with the same vigour and energy.

As underlined by President Khatami here last week, the emergence of a world culture is another reality. But such a culture should not overlook native local cultures with the aim of imposing itself upon them. National cultures have gradually evolved in a process ensuring coherence in spite of the plurality and diversity that is found in many of them. This process creates a sense of belonging.

We need the same harmony and sense of belonging for the emerging world culture. The answer is participation and not assimilation and imposition. Last year, I proposed recognition of the right of nations and peoples to preserve and nourish their culture and cultural identity. The General Assembly adopted resolution 54/160 in this regard. We continue to believe that in the process of globalization, it is essential to recognize and respect cultural rights of individuals and communities.

We should transform globalization, particularly in the area of culture, into a democratic, participatory and

natural process of globality. The United Nations can facilitate this process by promoting dialogue for the exchange of knowledge, experience and understanding in diverse areas of culture and civilization. The promotion of global participation in the process will prevent a sense of alienation and "cultural homelessness" in major parts of the world.

The designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is the first step in this direction. The unprecedented worldwide reception of this proposal indicates first and foremost a general need for dialogue. The round table on dialogue among civilizations, which was held here in New York on the eve of the Millennium Summit with the participation of a significant number of heads of State, Foreign Ministers and prominent scholars and thinkers, underlined that dialogue should become the new paradigm of international relations. This constituted a proper launching of the United Nations Year of Dialogue. It must be augmented by serious programmes and the commitment of all to make this a meaningful reality which should persist in human experience long after the United Nations Year of Dialogue ends. In this context, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is currently chaired by President Khatami, has recently adopted a draft "global agenda on dialogue among civilizations", to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We hope that in the course of the next several months, consultations between various delegations will lead to further enrichment and the adoption of this draft at the next General Assembly.

The United Nations can naturally play a leading role in the democratic global change in the political scene. Crises in disparate parts of the world challenge the relevance of the United Nations, requiring it not to take the back seat.

The situation of Palestine represents a vivid illustration of the failure of the international community to provide justice to millions of people deprived of their homeland and the most fundamental human rights through State terrorism, aggression and foreign occupation. Of over 7.5 million Palestinians, 4 million live in diaspora, and many of the rest under foreign domination. This lies at the heart of the Palestinian question. Disregarding the joint processes of expulsion and occupation cannot lead to the restoration of peace and tranquillity in that volatile region. In fact, Israel's persistent disregard for the rights of the Palestinian people, coupled with Zionist policies of aggression, State terrorism and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, continue to pose the greatest threat to regional peace, security and stability. Palestine belongs to all Palestinians irrespective of their creed. Peace can return to the region only through an end to the occupation of all Arab and Muslim territories, including the Golan Heights, the restoration of the rights of Palestinian people, including their right to return to their homeland, the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination through democratic means and the establishment of their independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

The persistence of the tragic fratricide in Afghanistan, along with the dire humanitarian situation, violations of human rights, particularly those of women and girls, the production and trafficking of narcotics and the harbouring and training of terrorists have created a human catastrophe. Peace and national reconciliation can be attained only through abandoning the illusion of a military solution and the domination of one ethnic group. The United Nations, through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the "six plus two" Group, continues to provide the most suitable mechanism to facilitate intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at a responsible, broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government. The Islamic Republic of Iran has played an active role in this process. Also, in his capacity as Chairman of the OIC, President Khatami has undertaken an initiative to bring the warring factions to negotiations. We are prepared to continue this exercise in close coordination with the United Nations.

There are other humanitarian challenges emerging globally, requiring the United Nations to respond. Failure to act may bring about arbitrary and selective — and, naturally, politically motivated — responses from States and non-universal organizations. The articulation of the criteria for rule-based reaction and the allocation of necessary resources and capacity-building in the United Nations for timely response constitute two major tasks ahead. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, prevention through diplomacy and economic development is the most effective and least costly type of global engagement.

Good-governance at the international level requires the provision of rational and comprehensive mechanisms to ensure security for all. Nuclear disarmament is the most fundamental priority in this

regard. It is imperative to initiate multilateral negotiations for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, within a time-bound framework and through a comprehensive and universal convention. The proposal of the Secretary-General to convene an international conference on nuclear weapons is a valuable contribution; such a conference could build upon our collective achievement during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Furthermore, following the outcome of the NPT Review Conference, serious and comprehensive international pressure should come to bear on Israel to accede to the Treaty and to put its installations under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. This would pave the way for the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Finally, in reforming global governance, the role and efficiency of the General Assembly, as the sole democratic, universal and transparent organ of the United Nations, must be augmented. It should focus its deliberations on contemporary challenges rather than hold outdated debates, coupled with effective responses to the reports of other organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council.

Efforts to work out a special political role for the United Nations come at a time when the Organization is in one of the worst periods of its existence from a financial perspective. The tasks that the international community expects the United Nations to fulfil require more innovative ways of raising money for the smooth functioning of the Organization.

In this context, it may be instructive to remember that if only a tiny percentage of the military expenditures of the Member States were allocated to the specific activities of the United Nations, the goal of creating a more secure global environment would be much more efficiently achieved.

The current session of the General Assembly follows the Millennium Summit, the Inter-Parliamentary Union summit, the global gathering of religious leaders and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization roundtable on dialogue among civilizations. As such, it represents a tremendous and historic opportunity to take advantage of the political will expressed in those unprecedented gatherings, to operationalize their declarations and decisions, and to move the United Nations forward to an era of stability, justice, peace and good governance, through participation and the rule of law. Commensurate with such a historic opportunity, we are all accountable before our own people and the people of the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.